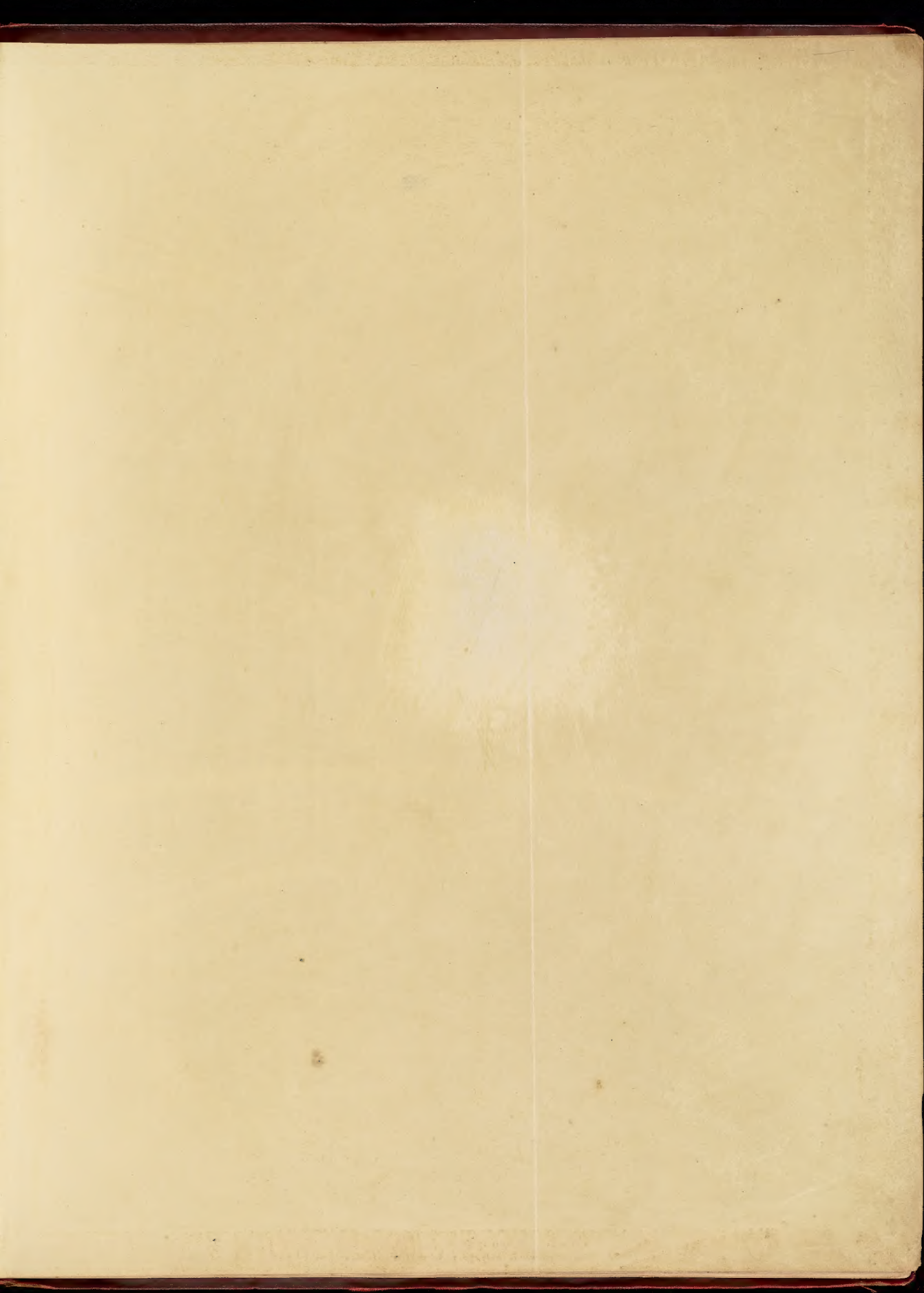


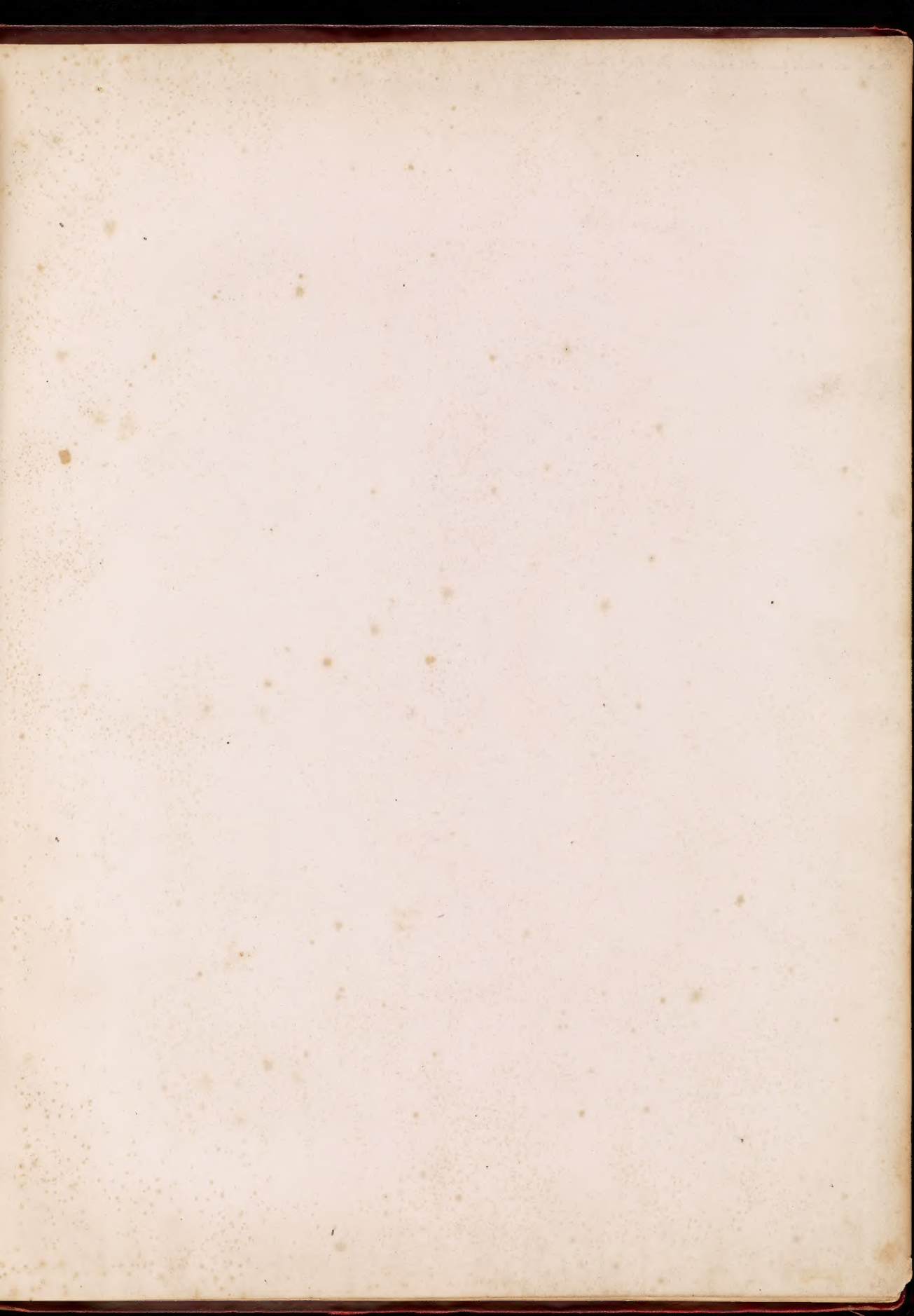
C. Edge



**"Winchcombe"
Halesowen**









SIR THOMAS HOLTE, KNIGHT AND BARONET.

(from the Original in the possession of Mr. Robins, of Allesley Hall.)

A HISTORY
OF THE
HOLTES OF ASTON,

BARONETS;

WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE FAMILY MANSION,

ASTON HALL, WARWICKSHIRE,

BY

ALFRED DAVIDSON.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS

BY

ALLEN E. EVERITT.

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ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

TO

CHARLES HOLTE BRACEBRIDGE, ESQ.,

OF

ATHERSTONE HALL, WARWICKSHIRE,

THIS

BRIEF HISTORY

OF HIS

MATERNAL ANCESTORS

IS

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

THE JOURNAL OF THE

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

CHICAGO, ILL.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

VOLUME 1

PREFACE.

THE universal expression of regret with which the announcement, made in the summer of 1851, that a considerable portion of Aston Park was about to be appropriated for building purposes, was received, led to the idea in my mind that a History of the Family who so long possessed it might be appropriately offered to the public. In the prosecution of this purpose I have had occasion to apply to many gentlemen, and from all I have received the utmost kindness and attention. To Charles Holte Bracebridge, Esq., the grandson of Sir Charles Holte, the last Baronet, I am indebted beyond my ability to express. His generous confidence, his undeviating friendliness, and unwearied courtesy—in the communication of information; the loan of title-deeds, manuscripts, pedigrees, inventories, copies of wills, and letters; and the explanation of points of difficulty—have been so constant and unremitting, that I feel the highest pleasure in thus publicly acknowledging my obligations. To Mr. Bracebridge I am also further indebted for the presentation of the plate of his ancestor, Sir Thomas Holte. To M. D. Hill, Esq., Recorder of this Borough; to W. H. Spilsbury, Esq., Librarian of Lincoln's Inn; to J. B. Davidson, Esq., of Chancery Lane; to Francis Willington, Esq., of Tamworth; and to T. S. James, Esq., of this town, for their valuable professional assistance; to J. H. Dixon, Esq., of Oldswinford, for access to his extensive collection of correspondence; and to Mr. T. B. Wright, Mr. E. Robins, Mr. D. R. Hill, and Mr. E. Holt, I likewise desire to tender my warmest thanks. Nor can I omit to express my sense of the kindness of Mr. J. Y. Robins, in spontaneously offering the loan of the original portrait of Sir Thomas Holte, now at Allesley Hall, and which has been copied for the purpose of embellishing this work. To those other gentlemen, both of the clergy and laity, from whom I have received communications, as also to those who, without being able individually to afford me information, have, in various ways, manifested their interest in my undertaking, I desire to express my appreciation of the obligations conferred. And, lastly, to my friend, Mr. Allen E. Everitt, I offer my hearty thanks for the valuable assistance he has from time to time rendered me, and the deep interest he has invariably shown in the success of my researches.

A. D.

Highgate, Aston,

November 7th. 1853.

PEDIGREE OF THE FAMILY OF HOLTE.



A HISTORY
OF THE
FAMILY OF HOLTE,
OF ASTON HALL, WARWICKSHIRE.

WHATEVER may be the abstract value of genealogical records, or what their tendency, whether as ministering to arrogance or stimulating to excellence, is not a question that needs to be discussed in these pages. Family names become associated with certain localities;—mansions erected, churches endowed, schools or alms-houses reared, speak of those who may have long departed from the earth, but whose memories are thus perpetuated to future ages, and whose history becomes a part of that of the district where their deeds have been performed. However uninteresting a history of a family may appear to a stranger, no one can visit a magnificent mansion, or gaze on a stately monument, without desiring to know somewhat of the history of the founder of the one, or the person to whose memory survivors have dedicated the other. And, doubtless, many who have gazed on the noble mansion of Aston Hall, reposing in stately majesty amid venerable Spanish chestnuts and antique elms coeval with itself, have desired to learn something of the Family by whom that building was erected, and of their history, chequered by sunlight and gloom, until the star of their glory sank into its final darkness.

The family name is a Saxon word, signifying a grove or woody place, and the first member of it of whom any mention is made is

I.—SIR HENRY HOLTE,* who probably resided in this vicinity at the close of the thirteenth century, but of whose history and birthplace no particulars are known. He was succeeded by his son,

II.—HUGH DEL HOLTE, or ATTE HOLTE, who married Maud, daughter of Sir Henry de Erdington, Baron of Erdington. He died in 1322, (16 Edward II.,) (his wife surviving him,) leaving a son,

III.—JOHN ATTE HOLTE, who married Alice, daughter, and at length sole heiress of Sir George Castells, who was descended from a family of that name, formerly lords of Withybrook, in the county of Warwick, and by a female ancestor from Reginald de Asseles, lord of Nechells. When he died is not stated, but probably it was about the year 1330, (4 Edward III.) He was followed by his son,

* This name does not occur in Dugdale. It is first given in Collins's Baronetage, from an illuminated roll lent to him by Sir Charles Holte, and with the use of which we have been favoured by Mr. Bracebridge. The Christian name, however, is now missing. In this pedigree the name is invariably spelt Holte, though it frequently occurs elsewhere without the "e." The final letter, however, appears to have come into regular use before the middle of the sixteenth century.

IV.—SIMON DEL HOLTE,* styled of Birmingham, who married Albreda, called by Collins in his Baronetage "de Birmingham," but the statement is not supported by Dugdale, and the mistake arose from a careless transcript of that writer's pedigree. This Simon, in 1331, (5 Edward III.,) purchased the manor of Neehells, "in consideration of xl. li. of silver," from Alice, widow of Sir George de Castells, and heiress of Aliva, one of the co-heiresses of Simon de Asseles. This is the person whom our local historian makes to apostrophise his "degenerate" descendant in these words:—"I, with nervous arm, and many a bended back, drew £40 from the Birmingham forge, with which, in 1330, I purchased the park and manor of Neehells." * * * "I planted that Family which you have plucked up by the roots; in the sweat of my brow I laid a foundation for greatness; many of my successors built on that foundation," &c. It is evident that Mr. Hutton's statement is incorrect, for the Family must, at the time referred to, have been of consideration, as the intermarriages with the Erdingtons and the Castells testify; and the indignant apostrophe of the worthy old "blacksmith" must be passed aside as an airy nothingness.

Sir William Dugdale, in his reference to Gilsdon, (Warwickshire, p. 1022,) mentions a Thomas Holte, whom Mr. Hamper considers to have been a son of John, father of Simon. This Thomas married Margaret, daughter of John de Collesley; between whom and her sister Alice a partition of their father's property took place in 1348, (22 Edward III.) The manor of Gilsdon was allotted to this Margaret, who, surviving her husband, married Philip de Budeford, and he, joining with his wife, sold the estate.

V.—JOHN ATTE HOLTE succeeded his father, and was living in 1348, (22 Edward III.) The name of his wife is given in the pedigree as Maude Grimsarowe and Maydenhach. He had two sons, John and Walter, and was called the elder, to distinguish him from his son. He was followed by his elder son,

VI.—JOHN ATTE HOLTE, who married Agnes, daughter and co-heiress of William Durvassal, of Spennall. In 1365, (39 Edward III.,) he purchased, for forty marks, the manor of Duddeston, from John de Grimsarwe. Two years following, Maud de Grimsarwe, by her charter dated at Aston on the Sunday next before the feast of St. Agapite the Martyr, conveyed to him the manor of Aston. John's younger brother died without issue, and he himself leaving no children, was succeeded by his uncle,

VII.—WALTER ATTE HOLTE, who married Margery, daughter of Sir William Bagot, of Baginton. In 1376-7 he served the office of escheator for the counties of Warwick and Leicester, "a service in those days of great trust, and wherein none but persons of eminent worth and quality were employed." In the latter year he was also principal commissioner in Warwickshire for levying and collecting the fifteenth and tenth granted by Parliament to the King. By a feoffment to one William Whetele and other persons in trust, he settled the manor of Aston to the use of himself and Margery his wife, and to his own right heirs. His wife survived him, and the better to secure the estate, enfeoffed it to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, Sir William Bagot, of Baginton, and other persons of quality. The reason of these enfeoffments may be gathered from a petition presented to the House of Lords in 1393-4, by John Drayton, which stated that Richard Lonches and Elizabeth his wife were seised of the manor of Aston, of which they were disseised by Thomas de Colshull, John Holte, and others; whereupon the said Richard and Elizabeth, by an assize of new disseisin, recovered the manor, which they demised to the petitioner for the term of his life, and of which he was accordingly possessed, but was subsequently dispossessed by Margaret, wife of Walter Holte, and the said John, her son, and others. The petitioner, having recovered the manor, was again dispossessed, on which he brought a fresh action of re-disseisin, and the Sheriff appointed a day for trial of the cause, but when the inquest was assembled, Sir William Bagot, with a large company,

* The roll already referred to places the arms of Simon by the side of John atte Holte's, from which it may be inferred that they were brothers

came, and threatened the Sheriff and the petitioner, so that the former dared not do his duty, and the petitioner was thus kept out of his rights, and therefore prayed their Lordships to ordain a remedy.* No statement of the result is given, but the manor appears to have remained in the possession of the Holtes. Walter had three sons, John, Simon, and William. Of

VIII.—JOHN HOLTE, the elder, styled of Yardley, Esquire, little is known. He made another enfeoffment of the estate, in fee simple, to Sir William Bagot, one of his mother's trustees, probably to endeavour still further to secure his title. Immediately contiguous to the churchyard of Yardley is a moat, in an excellent state of preservation, encircling a plot of ground on which was formerly a mansion house belonging to the Family, and where, probably, this John had his residence. He is stated to have had but one son, Audomar, or Aymer, who succeeded him, but mention is made of a Walter Holte, probably a younger son, who was of full age in 1403, (5 Henry IV.,) who shortly after that time passed the manor of Spennall (to which he became entitled as heir of the Durvassals, through Agnes, wife of John atte Holte) to John Reve, Vicar of Coughton.

IX.—AUDOMAR HOLTE succeeded to the estate on the death of his father, but was dispossessed by his uncle William, the younger son of Walter, who, in the first year of the reign of Henry IV., obtained a grant of the estate for life. The King challenged a legal title to the property as son and heir of John, Duke of Lancaster, one of the feoffees of Margery,—a claim which had no shadow of right to support it, as the Duke was merely a trustee. From the words used in the patent, "*dilectus armiger noster*," (our well-beloved esquire,) it is not impossible that he might have been in immediate attendance on the person of Henry before he ascended the throne. In order, however, to enjoy possession for his own life, William Holte was meanly content to sacrifice, not only the claims of his nephew whom he had robbed, but also to extinguish for ever, as of right, the interest which his own children, if he should have any, might possess in the estate. But the usurper was not permitted to enjoy his ill-gotten treasure without interruption. He had possessed the manor only three years, when Sir William Bagot, one of the trustees named in the feoffment made by Margery, wife of Walter, considering his title equal to that of the King, advanced a claim to the property. This Sir William had been a great favorite with Richard II., and when Henry landed at Ravenspur, fled, with others, to Bristol; but the discontented lords, taking advantage of the King's absence in Ireland, raised an army of 60,000 men, and besieged and took the castle, Sir William escaping to Ireland. He came back, however, with Richard; for in a month after Henry began his reign, he was committed prisoner to the Tower, (November 22,) probably as a matter of precaution merely, for on the 24th of December following, the Sheriff of Warwickshire received command to allow the feoffees of his lands to have possession. On the 23rd of January, however, this restitution was superseded, but on the 12th of November the Constable of the Tower had orders for his release. In 1403, (5 Henry IV.,) he was elected knight of his shire, and having been received into the royal favour, claimed the estate as trustee. After much disputation, both parties consented to refer the matter to the arbitration of Edward, Duke of York, and Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, binding themselves to submit to the decision of these noblemen in bonds of £200 each. William Holte, however, kept possession, Sir William Bagot, his competitor, dying in 1407, (9 Henry IV.)† After the lapse of a considerable time, Audomar asserted his claim, and in 10 Henry VI., (1431,) according to a statement in the reply to John Holte's petition in 29 Henry VI., (1450,) recovered the manor after course of law, before the Judges of the King's Bench, though his uncle appears still to have retained possession, as in 15 Henry VI., (1436,) he released to two persons named Ward and Shyngler, as feoffees, all his right in the estate; and the next year, for the further confirmation of his title, Audomar, his nephew, and the right heir, was induced to release his right and claim; but for what consideration is not stated.

* Rolls of Parliament, Vol. III., p. 326.

† The monument to his memory, (a fine brass,) at Baginton, has been recently repaired by Lord Bagot.

X.—WILLIAM HOLTE, who is styled of Stanford, in 1401, (3 Henry IV.,) and of Aston, Esquire, 1433-5, (12 and 14 Henry VI.,) appears in the list of gentry returned by the Commissioners in 1433,* (12 Henry VI.,) and is described as having been one of the chief persons in Warwickshire, being chosen in the following year to make oath for the performance of certain articles concluded in the Parliament then held. In 1422, (1 Henry VI.,) he held the office of Sheriff of Worcestershire. When he died does not appear, but having no issue, and his interest in the estate being but for life, in 1440, (19 Henry VI.,) John, his nephew, procured from the Crown letters patent for the inheritance, with all the privileges and liberties belonging thereto, for himself and his heirs, to be held of the chief lord of the fee, and not of the King *in capite*. Thus the property so unjustly alienated was restored to the right line, this John being now the sole male representative of the Family.†

In a former page it was stated that Walter and Margery Holte had three sons, of whom Simon was the second. This Simon, described as of Nechells in 1398, (22 Richard II.,) and as alive in 1407, (9 Henry IV.,) married Maud, daughter and heiress of Richard Collynge, of Bridgnorth; she was surviving at Nechells in 1438, (17 Henry VI.) Two sons were (according to Collins) the issue of this marriage, but Dugdale makes mention of one only, while Hamper is of opinion there was a daughter also, Marion, who married Thomas Easte, she and her husband being both alive in 1447, (26 Henry VI.)

XI.—JOHN HOLTE succeeded his uncle, and was twice married. In 1440, (19 Henry VI.,) he was styled Esquire, and was living in 1470, (49 Henry VI.) His first wife was Margaret, daughter of Sir Richard Delabere, Knight, of Kynardsley, Herefordshire. In 1438, (17 Henry VI.,) he was appointed escheator for Warwickshire and Leicestershire, and was a faithful subject of the amiable but unfortunate Henry VI., to whom he became an esquire of the body,‡ and from whom he received protection against the act of resumptions in the 28th year of his reign, in the following terms:—

"Provided also that this act extende not nether be prejudicial to John Holte, Esquier, and Margarete his wyf, nether to the heires and assignes of the same John, of any graunte or confirmation made to them by us by our letters patentes beryng date the vi day of Marche the xix yere of oure reigne, of the manor of Aston, in the county of Warwyk, and of iiiiii messuages of londe, with the appurtenances in Dodesdon and in Bordesley, which the Duke of Lancastre, fader to our ayell Kyng Harry the Fourth had with other of the feofement of Margery somtyme the wyfe of Waulter Holte to the use and behove of the said Margery and of herr heires, to whom the said John Holte is cosyn and heyre; nor of any franchises or liberties in the same letters specified, of which the seide Margery and her auncestres and all thos whos estate the same Margery hadde yn the same maner and franchises have be seyd fro the tyme of which no mynd ys."

In the following year he again presented a petition, praying that the act of resumptions might not be prejudicial either to himself, his wife, or his heirs, in respect of the said patent, considering that the manor of Aston had been duly recovered according to due course of law, before the Justices of Common Pleas, in the tenth year of the said King's reign, by the said Aymer (Audomar) Holte, cousin (grandson) and heir of the before specified Walter Holte, against William Holte, Esq., the tenant thereof, by virtue of certain letters to him made.§ The prayer of the petition was complied with by the King, the following being the terms of the "responsio":—

"Provided also that this act of Resumption extende not nor be prejudicial to John Holte, Squire, nor Margarite his wiff, nor to the Heirs or assignees of the same John, of or in the manor of Aston, with the appurtenances, in the Shire of Warrewick, nor to non other person enfeofed of and in the said manor of Aston to the use of the said John, nor of and in iiiiii messuages, iiiiii plowe lands with the appurtenances, in Dodesdon and Bordesley, nor to any Yifte, Graunte, or Confirmature made, as by our letters patentes to the said John Holte and Margarete and to the Heirs and assignees of the said John Holte of the seide manor and landes with their appurtenances, nor to the said liberties, franchises, quittances conteyned in the same, consideringe that the said manour was duly recovered after the course of our law, before our Judges of our Commyn Bench the x yere of our reigne by oon Aymer Holte cosyn and heire of oon Walter Holte against William Holte, Squire, thenne beyng tenant and seised of the said manour by virtue of our letters patentes by us to hym made and

* Fuller's Worthies; Article—Warwickshire.

† Sec. Pars Pat., anno 19 Hen. VI.—"Rex concessit Joh'ni Holte in feodo manerium de Aston, in comitatu Warr', cum visu franci plegij, infangtheof, ac alijs libert', tenend' de capitali domino, et non de Rege, quondam Walteri Holte."—Cal. Rot. Pat., p. 282.

‡ "This Jhon Holte was esquyrr for the boodye too Kyngs Henddrye the Syxte."—*Illuminated Pedigree*.

§ Rolls of Parliament, 29 Henry VI.—Vol. V., p. 217.

granted, as by record of the said recoverer and by a bill making mention of the premises to us furth by the said John Holte in this present Parliament more pleynty may appear."—P. 224.

In 1460, (39 Henry VI.,) on the rebellion of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, this John was made Ranger of Sutton Chase, the patent bearing date at Coventry, May 23rd. The words "*De gratiâ nostrâ speciali, ac consideratione diutini et continui servitii quod humilis servitor noster Joh. Holte, armiger de hospitio nostro,*" &c., (of our special favour, and in consideration of the daily and constant service which our humble servant, John Holte, esquire of our household, &c.,) would seem to testify the high esteem in which he was held by the King, and the closeness of his attendance on the royal person. Dugdale thinks him to have been a "menial servant," but the words would appear to refer to his office of esquire of the body to the monarch. His second wife was Joyce Raynford, whom he married before 1470, (49 Henry VI.,) and who was a widow in 14 Edward IV. In 1454, (33 Henry VI.,) a fine was levied between two parties named Waldeyve and Leycroft, plaintiffs, and John Holte, Esq., and two others, deforciant, when it appeared in evidence that the inheritance of Nechells was vested in Waldeyve, but most probably it was to the use of John and his heirs; as in 1529 (20 Henry VIII.) it belonged to Thomas Holte, "*de Medio Templo, London, generosus.*" In the time of the latter, Nechells had four farms and a cottage. After a long and prosperous career, John's sun, which had risen amid storms and tempests, set in peace. He had two children, Elizabeth, married to John Rugeley or Rudgeley,* of Wigginton, and a son,

XII.—WILLIAM HOLTE, Esq., who married Margaret,† daughter of William Cumberland, Esq., of Cumberland, in the county of Stafford. He was alive in 1498, (13 Henry VII.,) and his lady in 17 Edward IV. He had issue three sons, William, who succeeded him, John, and Thomas. In the very curious original Boke of the Guild of Knowle, (in the possession of W. Staunton, Esq., of Longbridge, near Warwick,) among the members of the guild, in 1498, occurs the name of Thomas Holte. William Holte was a merchant of the Staple, and his name occurs twice in the Rolls of Parliament, in the reign of Henry VI., with reference to the subsidy of "*wolles and wolfell.*" Besides his sons, he had six daughters, Alice, Joan, Anne, Margaret, Christian, and Elizabeth. His elder son,

XIII.—WILLIAM HOLTE, Esq., married Joanna, daughter of Adam Knight, Esq., of Shrewsbury. She was living in 1511, (3 Henry VIII.) He had a family of four sons, Thomas, his successor, Mark, John, and Nicholas;‡ and seven daughters,—Elizabeth, married to Weston; Margaret, to Stanley, of Derbyshire; Anne, to Piers, of Warwick; Frances, to Forster, of Shropshire; Ellen, to Perman; Winefrid, to Thomas Hawkins, alias Fisher, Esq., of Warwick; and Margery, to Nicholls. No particulars of his history have been handed down. He lies buried in the north aisle of Aston Church, under an altar tomb, on which rests his effigy, life-size. He is clad in a suit of mail armour, a surcoat covering the upper part of his body; his hands, which are ungloved, are joined in the attitude of prayer. His head, uncovered, rests on a helme, and at his feet reposes a couchant lion. The front of the tomb is divided by buttresses into four compartments, each consisting of a cinquefoil panel, and containing, crowned, and vested in long robes, an angel with extended wings, and bearing on his breast a shield. The shields are charged with the following arms:—1st, Holte, impaling Knight; 2nd, singly, Delabere; 3rd, Cumberland; and 4th, De Wolvey. The inscription round the verge, which has, with the exception of small portions, long been obliterated, is given by Dugdale as follows:—

"Of your charity, pray for the soule of William Holt, Esquyre, sometime Lord of this towne, and Joane his wife. Which William dy'd the xxviii September, the yeare of howre Lord mcccxxiii."

The date of the year was either mistaken or imperfect, probably the former, and that, perhaps, by the engraver of the plate, as it is scarcely probable an error of so grave a kind would have been

* Sanders, in his History of Shenstone, makes Rugeley to have been Ranger of Sutton Chase in 16 Henry VI. The name of his wife is also given by the same author as Margery.—P. 34.

† Sanders incorrectly states her name to have been Mary.—P. 258.

‡ The illuminated pedigree has the following note appended:—"This William Holte had thre sunes, Thomas, Vmfrey, and Nykkolas, which Nykkolas was father to Ane Peerse."

allowed to remain by those who erected the monument. The date should have been 1514. This monument is the oldest remaining of the Family. All antecedent ones—if any ever existed—must have been destroyed more than two centuries since; it is interesting, therefore, to emerge from the region of mere genealogy into what may be termed the light of day, and to be able to point to this ancient relic of the Family. The successor of William was his elder son,

XIV.—THOMAS HOLTE, who was a “learned lawyer” and Justice of North Wales in the reign of Henry VIII., the patent bearing date in or about the sixteenth year of that King’s reign. He was also in the commission of the peace for the county of Warwick, and was appointed one of the commissioners for taking the surrender of monasteries in the same district.* Probably his good service in the cause led to his higher appointment. In a letter from Richard, Bishop of Dover, to Cromwell, dated August 27, 1538, the following passage occurs:—“And also I praye you be good lorde to yower servant master Holte, and to master —; they have moche comforteyd me.”† In an act of the Privy Council, dated at Ampthill, September 29, 1540, his name is inserted in a commission “for to examyn what juels, plate, and orname’ts be embecilled from the shryne of St. David’s, by whom and to what value; and also what is left there and to what value the same is, and to put the same in suretye to the King’s use.”‡ At the time of the suppression of Hales Owen Abbey he was “sub-seneschall of the court of the said Lord Abbot.” He married Margery, the elder of the seven daughters and co-heiresses of William Willington, of Barcheston, a wealthy merchant of the Staple. Surviving her husband, she married Sir Ambrose Cave, Knight, of Stanford, Northamptonshire, who was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the time of Elizabeth.§ Mr. Bracebridge has in his possession a deed dated 1544, (35 Henry VIII.,) being a decree in Chancery, under the great seal, in a suit between Edward Birmingham, Lord of Birmingham, and Thomas Holte, Bencher of the Middle Temple, Lord of Aston. The Justice lies buried in the north aisle of Aston Church, by the side of his father, his monument being of brass, laid in the floor. It contains portraitures of himself and wife, over their heads being a shield, Holte impaling Willington. Immediately beneath the figures is the following tetrastic:—

“Thomas Holte here lyeth in grave: Ihu for thyn passyon
On him thou have compassyon, and his soolle do save.”

Below this are the ichnographs of a male and two female figures. Enclosing the whole of the characters is an oblong border, having at the angles quadrangulated circles figured with the symbols of the four Evangelists, the cherub, lion, ox, and eagle; and bearing the following inscription:—

“Of yo charitye praye for the sooles of Thomas Holte, Esquier, late Justice of North Wales, and lorde of this towne of Aston, and Margerye his wyfe: wich Thomas deceased the xxiii daye of Marche, anno Dni mccccxlv whose sooles God pardon.”

The Justice is clad in a long gown reaching to the feet, but permitting the broad-toed shoes to appear. A tunic is thrown gracefully over the shoulders, one portion being gathered over the left arm, and falling in front, while on the other side it is thrown back, so as to show the ample sleeve on the right arm, to which is attached the gypcière, or purse. The hands are raised in the attitude of prayer, the right holding a scroll. The head of the figure has been destroyed. The lady wears the angular or pedimental head-dress, with lappets; a tight boddiece, and bishop sleeves, terminating with graceful cuffs. Round the waist is a cincture, with an ornamental knot at the front of the stomacher. The skirt of the robe is full and flowing, and at the front is gathered up under

* Extract of a Letter from Thomas Lord Burdenell to Sir William Dugdale, dated November 18th, 1655:—“Families of yr owne countie that you write on may in the p’geny of Grevile, Holt, Fitzharb’t, Gage, St. Cleere, and others, take yr memorie of their ancessors upon this occasion not as a favor: yet truthe and auctoritie warrants much more then they can quarrell at, and therefore I say—Prosperé procede.”—*Hamper’s Dugdale’s Life and Diary*, p. 296.

† Documents relative to Suppression of Monasteries, p. 213.

‡ Acts of Privy Council, (Commissioners’ Records,) Vol. VII., p. 46.

§ Sir Ambrose is well known, from the circumstance of having, at a ball, picked up the Queen’s garter, which, her Majesty declining to receive from him, he wore on his arm, and is so represented in a portrait. He left one child, a daughter, Margaret, wife of Henry, third son of Sir Francis Knollys.

the right arm. The figures, with the exception just noticed, are in an excellent state of preservation. The design is characterised by freedom and boldness; and the execution is good. The Justice had a son, Edward, who succeeded him; and is also supposed to have had another son, John, or Joseph, who had a son, Barnaby, baptized at Aston, September 13, 1579, as the child of Joseph Holte, of Duddeston, gent.; and a daughter Isabella, baptized September 2, 1580.*

From a roll of parchment, 5 feet 9 inches long by 5 inches wide, headed "The Inventory of all the goodes and catells movable and unmovable, plate, juells, and housold stuffe of Thomas Holte, Esquier, decessed, made the eighth daie of Apill, in the yere of the reyne of oure moste dradde Souvrein Lord Henry the Eight, by the grace of God, Kynge of Englonde, Ffrance, and Ireland, Deffender of the faythe, and of the Churche of Englonde and Irelande in earthe supreme hedde, the xxxvijth," we glean some interesting particulars as to the size of his residence at Duddeston, the nature and description of its furniture, and the extent of his rural occupations. The sleeping apartments were thirteen in number,—the chambur over the buttrie, the chappell chambur, the maydes' chambur, the great chambur, the inner chambur to the great chambre,† the yatehowse chambur, the inner chambur to the same, the geston chambur, the crosse chambur, the inner chambur to the same, the clark's chambre, the yeomen's chambre, and the hyne's chambre. The other apartments were the hawle, the pleece, the storehowse, the galarye, the butterye, the ketchyn, the larder howse, the dey howse, the bakhowse, the bultyng howse, and the yeling howse. There was also a mylne: and forming a portion of the house was the chappell, the catalogue of the furniture of which we give entire:—

Inprimis a canabe, a pixe, and the sacrament thereof	...	...	xij s.	iiij d.
Item ij corporas cases ij pillos for the same, ij frunts, ij pere of vestments, a cope, ij candlesticks, a surples, a masbok, ij altr clothes, ij cruets, a pere of censers, ij torches, ij carpyt quissions, ij carpets, and a challes	...	...	vij li.	
Item in the boddy of the chappell a frunt for an alter, a cloth for the same, a pentyd table, and ij bolles	...	...	x s.	
Sum	ix li.	ij s.	iiij d.	

The principal bed chambers were hung with splendid hangings, those of the great chamber being "of gaye colors, blewe and redde;" one of the beds in the same room being "wrought with gildinge and fyne bise," and having "a tester of satten, blew and redde, with caverleyd of sarsnet of the same collar." In the same room were also "ij long satten quissions, a quission of yellow and blewe for the cheyre, and a quission of tynsoll for the cupborde." There was also a "knytte tester lyned about blewe with curteyns of white and blew for feet." The total value of the contents of this room was estimated at £13 14s. 4d. Nor were the other sleeping apartments without their share of luxurious adornment. In the inner chamber to the one last-mentioned, there were a "tester collored redde and yellow, a bedstyd, a fether bed, a bolster, a pere of blankets, a quilte, a covering, a cupborde, a carpyt to the same, and a nother to the wyndowe." In the "yatehowse chambur" the hangings were "redd and yellow," the tester "of redde and blewe chekered," the curtains "of blew tuke," and a "quission of redd satten and white." In the cross chamber were the "hanging ther," a "yoyned bed, carvon, a tester of blew damaske and tynsoll patten, with the curteynes of blew and grene sarsnet." The furniture in the living apartments is not of a character to call for remark; but the linen in the "chambur over the buttrie" requires to be noticed. It consisted of

Table clothes xxij wherof are of damaske and ij of diapur	...	...	iiij s.	
Table napkyns x dosen wherof ij dosen diapur and one of damaske	...	...	xl s.	
Fyne towells a dosen, wherof iiij diapur and one of damaske	...	...	xx s.	
Course towell, a dosen	...	...	vi s.	vij d.
Fyne shetes, xxx pere	...	...	v li.	
Course shetes, xxij pere	...	...	ij li.	
Pillo beres xxvj wherof xiiij fyne and xij course	...	...	xx s.	

* Under date 1568, 9th October, is an entry at Aston of the burial of Rodolphus, son of Rodolphus Hoult of Duddeston; and in 1570, 4th of February, of William, son of William Holte, of Deritend. Probably it was the latter William who was one of the executors of Edward Holte's will in 1592.

† So in original.

The kitchen contained potts, chaformes, skymmers, skellets, cressets, gredires, frying pannys, chafyng disshes, a brason mortar with a pestell, stone morters, striking knyves, broches, racks, brandards; cobberds, pothangings, hocks, a rack of iron; bowles and payles. The plate consisted of two gilt salts, with a cover to one; a gilt cup with a cover; two silver pieces; a silver cup with a cover; and a dozen and half of tea spoons,—value £16 10s.

The apparel of the Justice is curious:—

A gowne faced with velvet, a gowne lyned with damaske, a gowne faced with jewels, a gowne faced with pynes, a gowne lyned with grey connye (coney)	xiiij li.	vi s.	vij d.
ij jackets of vellet, a dublet of crymson damaske, a dublet of blak satten, a dublet of crymson satten, a dublet of tawney damaske, a new colored cote, a marble cote, a blak cote, a cloke, and ij spruse jurkyns	vij li.		
Sum	xx li.	vi s.	vij d.

The live stock, entitled "moveable godes," consisted of xix oxen and sterys, xxviij kyne, xvij young beste, xiiij young calves, xij gots, iiij geldings, ij mares, ij naggs and a colte; cccxix shepe, xix swyne, a crane, a turkye cok, and a henne with iiij chekyns; the value being £86 0s. 8d.

The inventory, amounting to £270 6s. 2d., was exhibited before the proper authorities at Sutton Coldfield, on the 4th of April, 1546. From it a tolerably correct idea of the extent of the Chief Justice's establishment may be gained; and it also affords good evidence that his wealth must have been considerable.

XV.—EDWARD HOLTE, who succeeded his father, was born in 1541, (33 Henry VIII.,) and was, therefore, only about four years old at his parent's decease. It is probable that he was confided to the guardianship of Sir Ambrose Cave, who subsequently married Margaret, the widow of the Justice, as Sir Ambrose presented to the vicarage of Aston, in right of his wife, (her son not being of age,) in 1552 and 1561. This Edward married Dorothy, daughter of John Ferrers, Esq., of Tamworth Castle.* He was a justice of the peace for Warwickshire, and served the office of High Sheriff for that county in 1583, (26 Elizabeth.) By letters patent of 1st July, 1573, (16 Elizabeth,) the Queen gave, for considerations therein expressed, the rectory of Aston, to this gentleman, for the term of twenty-one years after the expiration of a term of sixty years' lease granted to one Philip Holey, by John Oliver, D.C.L., dated 18th March, 1531, (23 Henry VIII.,) at the yearly rent of £17 6s. 8d., payable at the Feasts of St. Michael and the Annunciation.

By the will of his grandfather Willington, Edward Holte inherited considerable property. To the kindness of Francis Willington, Esq., of Tamworth, we are indebted for permission to make the following extract from a copy in his possession. Mr. Willington's courtesy is the more valuable, as the following, taken from a letter of Sir William Dugdale to Sir Simon Archer, will show:—"I received your letter, whereby you desire a copie of Will'm Willington's will, wch I should readily send you if I had it; but when I searcht the registers in the Prerogative Office I found it not, though I did earnestly endeavour so to doe; wch makes me doubt that it was not registered there. Therefore I was constrayned to make use of that old copie thereof wch I found amongst Sr Thomas Holt's writings; of wch I have taken short notes."—Hamper's Dugdale, p. 328. The will is dated March 28, 1555, and was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, November 14, 1559:—

"And further I will, that if I fortune to decease without issue male of my body lawfully begotten, then I will and bequeath to my daughter Margery Cave, and to the heirs of her body between Thomas Holte and her lawfully begotten, all those my lands, tenements, and hereditaments with their appurtenances within the towns, villages, and fields of Aston next Byrnyngham and Wyton, within the county of Warwick, Melton Mowiberye, within the county of Leicester,

* The Ferrers family was one of the noblest that sprang from the Norman chiefs of the Conquest. Dorothy's father was descended directly from Thomas, second son of William Ferrers, of Groby, Leicestershire, and Elizabeth Freville, heiress of Tamworth, the Frevilles representing the last of the Marmions, whose great grandfather was the original grantee of the castle, temp. Henry I. William Ferrers, of Groby, (now represented by the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, as Lord Grey, of Grooby,) was the direct descendant of the great Earl Henry de Ferrers, who came over with the Conqueror. The only representative of this family in Warwickshire, is Marmion Ferrers, Esq., of Baddesley Clinton, descended from Edward Ferrers, of Tamworth, ob. 1535.

Handsworth, in the county of Stafford, which did of late belong unto the dissolved chamber of Aston aforesaid, and also the Priory or Free Chapel of Birmingham, with all those lands and tenements to the said Priory or Free Chapel belonging, within Birmingham aforesaid, and the Lordship or Manor of the same within the lordship of Dudeston, together with certain lands and tenements lying within the lordship of Nechells, Salteley, within the said parish of Aston, sometime belonging to the late dissolved Guild of Deryttenne, within the said county of Warwick; which lands and tenements I lately had and purchased of one Thomas Hawkyins, otherwise called Fyssher, as by his deed thereof made more at large it doth appear, to have and to hold the premises, with their appurtenances, to my said daughter, in form aforesaid; and for default of such issue the premises to remain to the issue between Sir Ambrose Cave and my said daughter lawfully begotten. And also all my lands, tenements, and hereditaments with their appurtenances in the towns and parishes of Horborne, Haleshowen, Norfylde, and Smythwicke, within the counties of Worcester, Salop, and Stafford, to have and to hold the same to my said daughter Margery Cave, and to the heirs of her body lawfully begotten between her and the said Sir Ambrose Cave; and for default of such heirs I will that all my said lands, tenements, and hereditaments with their appurtenances in Aston, Wyton, Birmingham, Dudeston, Nechells, Melton, Hanseworthe, Horborne, Hayleshowen, and Norfild aforesaid, shall remain and come to the heirs of the said Margery lawfully begotten by Thomas Holt her late husband, and for default of such issue to my right heirs for ever. And I will that the residue of my said daughters and heirs and their husbands shall after my decease release and assure against them and their heirs the said lands and tenements and other the premises in Aston, Wyton, Birmingham, Dudeston, Nechells, Saltley, Melton, Hanseworthe, Horborne, Haleshowen, Norfild, and Smythwicke, with their appurtenances, to the said Margery Cave and to her said heirs according to the intent of this my will, with such remainders over thereof, and in like manner and form as is above declared of the same as shall be devised by the said Margery and her said heirs, at the costs and charges of the said Margery and of her heirs. And I will that the heir male apparent of the said Margery Cave, after my decease, at his full age of twenty-one years, shall have out of the same manors, lands, tenements bequeathed to the said Margery an yearly rent £20 to be paid him at the feasts of the Annunciation of our Lady and St. Michael the Archangel by even portions, which rent I bequeath to him out of the same by this my will, with like clause of distress for non-payment thereof as is aforesaid of other rents."

Edward Holte lies buried with his ancestors at Aston, his monument being affixed to the wall, near to his grandfather's. It consists of a representation of himself and lady, kneeling, one on either side of a reading-desk, in the attitude of prayer. He wears long flowing hair, has a peaked beard, and is partially clad in armour. The lady is habited in a long robe, over which is a kirtle. Round the neck is the well-known ruff, so fashionable in the days of Elizabeth; and on the head is a veil, thrown back so as to permit the features to be seen. The upper part of the monument is encircled with a semicircular arch, flanked by plain round pillars with Corinthian capitals. In the spandrels are shields, Holte quartering Willington, Delabere, &c., and Holte impaling Ferrers. Over the pediment is a shield charged with the armorial bearings of the Holte Family—azure, two bars or; in chief, a cross patée, fitché of the same. Resting on the shield is the crest—a squirrel sejant, *proper*.* in the forefeet a hazel branch slipped, vert; nuts proper. Beneath the shield is the motto "Exaltavit humiles," (He hath exalted the humble,) probably taken from the Gospel by Luke, chap. i., v. 52. The age of this gentleman, and the date of his death, are recorded in the inscription on his monument, as follows:—

"Here lieth buried EDWARDE HOLTE, Esquier, and DOROTHY his wife: wch Edward was Lorde of this Towne and Patron of this Chvrche or Vicaradge; He was also Lorde of Dvddeston and Nechells, and of divers other landes within this parische: who dyed abovt Candellmas, beinge abovt the age of one and fiftie yeares, in the xxxv yeare of the raigne of Qveene Elizabeth, and in the yeare of ovr Saviour Christ 1592."

By his will he leaves £500 each to his two daughters, Margaret and Mary; to his son Francis, the personage and appurtenances of Shenstone, Staffordshire; to his son Robert, property in Weston in Arden, near Bulkington, Warwickshire, and desires his executors to put this son apprentice to a merchant in London, and when he should attain the age of twenty-two, to make an "advancement" for him; to his dear wife sundry articles are left, and the remainder is bequeathed to his elder son, Thomas, who was to come into possession on attaining his twenty-second year. William Holte and others are appointed executors.

The date of his death was February 3rd, 1592; his lady was buried on the 20th of December, 1594. Three sons and seven daughters were the issue of this marriage. The names of the former were—Thomas, who succeeded to the estate, Francis, and Robert; of the latter, Anne married Edward Easte, Esq.; Lucy, John Hugford, Esq.; Catharine, Humphrey Wyrley, Esq., of Handsworth; Mary, George Smyth, Esq., son of George Smyth, Esq., of Wootton, Warwickshire; Dorothy and Margaret, who died unmarried; and Frances, who died young.

XVI.—SIR THOMAS HOLTE was born in 1571, (14 Elizabeth,) and could scarcely have attained his majority at his father's death. He enjoyed his property for the long space of sixty-two years,

* In the Books at the Herald's College, the squirrel is sometimes given argent.

and it was he who raised the Family to the highest pitch of its prosperity. When in his 28th year, 1599, (42 Elizabeth,) he served the office of Sheriff for the county, and in April, 1603, was a member of a deputation to welcome King James to England, and on the 18th of the same month, being then designated as of Cheshire, received the honour of knighthood. On the 25th of November, 1612, (9 James I.,) he was further advanced to the dignity of a Baronet. The reason of the foundation of this order of nobility was as follows:—The province of Ulster being in a state of great rebellion, the King, desirous of reducing it to obedience, hit upon an expedient which, without burden to the subject, or danger to the law, accomplished his object. Counting on the weakness of human nature, the "Royal Solomon" offered a title of Baronetcy to every gentleman possessed of an annual income of £1,000, who at the least was descended from a father and grandfather bearing arms, and was willing to maintain for the defence of Ireland, "and especially for the security of the province of Ulster," for three years, "thirty foot soldiers in the King's army, after the rate of 8d. sterling per day, which amounted in the whole to the sum of £1,095." Hence the popular and true idea of the cost of a Baronetcy having been £1,000. In order, perhaps, to divert the ridicule which the purchase of a title would cause, the royal commission of 1611 goes on to say that these extraordinary subsidies should be solemnly separated from all the other treasures of the kingdom, and kept apart by themselves, and wholly converted to this public and memorable work. The royal arms of Ulster—the red hand—were also assigned to the baronets for their assistance and services in the work of colonization, of which the King was so enamoured that he quartered the arms of Ireland on his shield, "he being," says an old author, "the first of our kings who bore the same quartered with the royal arms on his coin and seal." The notable scheme of the monarch succeeded so well, that at the time when Sir Thomas Holte acquired his title—a year after the creation of the order—ninety-three gentlemen had obtained the dignity, fifteen other patents bearing the same date as that of Sir Thomas. The original document is in the possession of Mr. Bracebridge. The parchment is plain, (without border,) except a pen-and-ink sketch of the King sitting in state, with the sceptre and globe. The receipt from the Exchequer for Sir Thomas's Baronetage money is also in the possession of Mr. Bracebridge. The former document is too long to transcribe, especially as a copy of the general form employed, and differing only in trivial particulars from the patent of Sir Thomas, has been published in the Baronetage of Kimber and Johnson, and also in other works. From the latter we extract the receipt for the first instalment of £365:—

In Pello Recept' de Termino Mich'is anno nono Regis Jacobi, sexto Decembris.

Warr'.—D. Thomas Holte Mil' et Baronett' trescent' sexagint' quinque libras de p'te mil'iv li'. p' ip'm D'no Regi Jacobo dat' et conc' ad manutenend' trigint' viros in cohortibus suis pedestr' in Regno d'no Hibernie p' defenso eiusdem et p'cipue p' securitat' plantac'o'is Provincie Ultonie ib'm p' spatium triu' annorum subsequen' s'c'd'm ratam viii d. p' quolib't huiusmodi pedit' p' diem duran' termino p'd'.

(In the Pells. Receipt at Michaelmas term, 9th James, 6th December.

Warwickshire.—Sir Thomas Holte, Knight and Baronet, £365, part of £1,095 given and conceded by him to King James for maintaining thirty men in his foot regiments in the kingdom of Ireland, for the defence of the same, and chiefly for the security of the province of Ulster there, for the space of three years following, after the rate of 8d. per day for each of the said footmen during the said term. £365 paid.)

And now, having attained to so great honour, this gentleman, who had, hitherto, as his ancestors before him, resided at the Manor House of Duddeston, and who is described by a descendant, (Sir Charles Holte, his great grandson,) as "a gentleman well read in most parts of learning, and versed in several languages," and as "highly esteemed in his county by men of all conditions, being of an even temper, truly just, charitable, and exemplary in his life and conversation;" having previously received a very large accession of property by his marriage with Grace, one of the daughters and co-heiresses of William Bradburne, Esq., of Hough, in the county of Derby, commenced the enclosing of the park at Aston, and in the month of April, 1618, began the erection of the noble mansion standing there. In order, however, to avoid a break in the continuity of the Family history, a description of the building is deferred to a subsequent page.

Sir Thomas, on the 21st June, 1599, (42 Elizabeth,) purchased the rectory of Aston, which had been granted to his father for a term of twenty-one years, in 1573, (16 Elizabeth.) By letters

patent, dated 20th June, 1599, the rectory and other properties were granted by the Crown to Edward Nelson and John Purnell, for £1,869 16s. 2d., at a yearly rent of £17 6s. 8d.; and on the day following the date of the patent, an indenture was made between the parties named and Thomas Holte, Esq., of Duddeston, by which it was agreed that, for a certain sum of money paid by the said Thomas Holte, the rectory should be sold to him. The execution was attested by six witnesses, and the deed enrolled in the close rolls of Chancery, on the 22nd June. The original is (or rather was) in the Rolls Office, Chancery Lane.

Sir Thomas had a family of fifteen children. His elder son, Robert, died young; the second, Edward, was born in 1600. This young gentlemen, at the age of fifteen, entered Hart Hall, (now Hertford College,) Oxford, as the elder son of a Baronet. (*Liber Matric. Aul. Cervin., Novembris 17^o, 1615*:—"Edouardus Holt, Baronetti filius, Waruicensis, annos natus, 15.") It is not known whether he took any degree. In *Iacobi Ara*, 1617, and in *Annæ Funebria*, 1619, he has Latin verses, his signature being "Baronetti fil. nat. max.)*" In consequence of his intimacy with the sons of Dr. King, Bishop of London, at College, he married Elizabeth, the elder daughter of that high dignitary. The match, however, was so displeasing to Sir Thomas, that he threatened to disinherit his son, and was only prevented by the personal interference of Charles I. The following is a copy of the monarch's letter, the original being in the possession of Mr. Bracebridge:—

"Charles R.

"Trusty and well beloved, Wee greet you well. Wee have taken knowledge of a marriage between your sonne and a daughter of the late Bishop of London, and of your dislike thereof, soe far expressed as to threaten a disinheritance of your sonne: of whom wee have also heard very well, as having many good parts that make him able to doe us service, and fitt rather to bee cherished of all good encouragements, than oppressed with a heavy hand. Whereas is no greater cause of offence against him, and the interest wee have in all our subjects, and especially in families of the best qualitie, giveth Us cause to interpose in this, where a severe proceeding against your sonne would endanger the overthrow of your house, whereof there are so many examples, and leave that tittle of honour which must descend upon him by our late father's gracious grants, contemptable, when it should fall upon one, deprived by your act of the state and means to support it. For the match, Wee consider and may well hope that a blessinge and many comforts will follow the daughter of a soe reverend and good a man, whose other children are in soe hopeful wayes and soe well disposed; and an alliance with them cannot be a disparagement,—and what inequalities you may thinke of betweene your sonne and her, for estate or otherwise, Wee will be ready to supply our grace and assistance, in giving him advancement and impartinge our favour to him in such wayes as his good parts are capable of. Wee doe therefore recommende it to you that you doe not only forbear any act against your sonne in respect of his match, but that you restore him into your former favour and good opinion, wherein Wee doubt not that our mediation upon grounds of much reason and indifference will soe far prevail with you, that Wee shall have cause to accept graciously your answer, which Wee expect you return unto Us with all conveniency. Given at our Courte at Hampton, the 7th day of August, in the third yeare of our reigne."

The marriage took place about the year 1624. Its further history will be adverted to in chronological order. It may be stated here, however, that Edward Holte was appointed groom of the bedchamber to the King, but the date of the appointment is not known.

In May, 1631, Sir Thomas took up his abode at his new residence, though it was not finished till April, 1635, and here he resided in great splendour, his ample resources enabling him to maintain in due state the dignity of his rank.†

In 1637, a will was drawn up, by which,—after reciting an indenture made in 1635, (10 Charles I.,) between Sir Thomas Holte, of the one part, and Sir Thomas Puckeridge, Anthony Roper, Richard Shuckburgh, Walter Giffard, and Richard Smallbrook, of the other part, whereby the manors and estates of Aston, Nechells, and Duddeston, and lands in Witton, Erdington, Washwood, Saltley, Bordesley, Birmingham, Honesworth, and the rectory of Aston, were assured to Sir Thomas for life; then to the uses of his will; then to the uses declared in the said indenture;—Sir Anthony Roper, Sir Richard Shuckburgh, William Giffard, and Richard Smallbrook were appointed trustees, with power to raise £1,500, and with £100, or, if not sufficient, £200 of that sum, to erect alms-houses at Aston for five men and five women, and, with the residue of the £1,500, to purchase hereditaments to the yearly value of £66 13s. 4d., to pay each of the inmates £5 4s. per annum, by weekly instalments of 2s., and 10s. to buy a furze gown, and a wain load of coals; appointing the

* Hannah's Poems of Dr. King, Bishop of Chichester.

† A bond for £4,000, from Peter Giffard to Sir Thomas, dated 1633, is in Mr. Bracebridge's possession.

yearly payment of £1 6s. 8d. for two lectures, and the like sum for collecting the rents. This document does not appear to have been executed; a rough draft (perhaps the only one drawn up) still remains. By a subsequent will, dated June 4, 1650, Sir Thomas (*inter alia*) directed the erection of a monument to the memory of himself and wife in Aston Church; and also empowered his executors to raise the sum of £300, and with £100 of that sum, and if that were insufficient, with £200, or more, to erect, or cause to be erected and built, one convenient alms-house of brick-work, in the town of Aston-juxta-Birmingham, somewhat beneath the vicarage, in the crofts there wherein the Tinker's House and Hollman's House did stand, along the street or lane side, with a garden to each, in case the testator should not do it in his life-time. The nominees (five men and five women) were to be appointed by his widow and the heirs male, and, in default, by the Vicar, Churchwardens, and Overseers of the parish. Eighteen trustees were appointed; and a rent-charge, of £88 per annum, arising out of the manors of Erdington and Pipe, and other lands, and payable at Lady-day and Michaelmas, was assigned for the support of the inmates.*

The estimation in which Sir Thomas was held at Court was so great that he was nominated by Charles, ambassador to the Court of Spain, but, on the plea of advanced age, was excused from the discharge of that important office. When, however, the war broke out between the King and Parliament, the old Baronet warmly assisted the Monarch with his purse,† but was disabled by age, being then more than seventy, from active service in the field. His previous habits of life also would have unfitted him for the discharge of military duties.

In the month of October, 1642, on the evenings of Sunday and Monday, the 16th and 17th,‡ Charles, whose army was marching from Shrewsbury to relieve Banbury Castle, staid at Aston two nights as the guest of the loyal old Baronet; and this visit, trivial in itself, has invested with an undying interest the edifice, as identifying it with the hapless fortunes of the ill-judging Monarch. To the present time the room where he slept is called "the King's Chamber," and, though it be bare, it retains a prestige which attaches to no other portion of the building.

That Sabbath evening was a memorable season in the annals of Aston Hall. We see, in imagination, the last rays of the setting sun glancing athwart those mosque-like minarets, whose metallad roofs yet retained their pristine freshness. We see the royal standard, as it proudly floats from the highest turret, as if in defiance of all gainsayers. We hear the clash of arms, the loud flourish of martial music, the joyous ringing of the old church bells, the glad acclaim of a loyal assemblage, who raise the shout which erst greeted the ear of the Jewish King; and we look on the sombre, pensive countenance of him, in whose honour all this demonstration is made, as he courteously acknowledges the deferential obeisances of the assembled throng. In that retinue of attendants on the Monarch, we likewise behold one, who, with sorrowful face and averted eye, casts around him furtive glances as the cavalcade proceeds, and is anxiously longing to see if the man who is so prodigal of his affection towards his Sovereign has any feeling of regard towards a son, whom, for eighteen years, he has viewed with unmitigated hatred. And, as no ray of compassion beams from the eye of the old man, we can well imagine that utter sinking of spirit which came over "the noblest, the best, and the bravest," of all who ever bore the name of Holte. Go, old man! hug thy patents and commissions—produce thy pardon from thy Sovereign, duly signed, sealed, and delivered, and defy the world to charge thee with crime—rejoice in thy noble mansion and thy broad domains—but remember! there is a canker at the root of all thy greatness, so long as

* The Commissioners' Reports, Vol. XXIX., Part 2, contain a full account of the charity.

† In Ashburnham's receipts from April, 1642, to October, 1643, occurs the following item:—"From the Lord Dunsmore, for Sir Thomas Holt, £65."

‡ Manley's *Iter Carolinum*, in Sancroft's *Collectanea Curiosa*. There is some discrepancy in the *Iter* respecting the 16th, but all accounts make Charles to have passed two nights at the Hall, and on the 18th, after reviewing the Staffordshire troops at Sutton Coldfield, he went on to Packington Hall. The *Iter* is also given in Lord Somers's Collection of Tracts, but the same discrepancy occurs there also.

that gallant son of thine—in so few days to shed his blood in thy royal master's cause—remains unforgiven for the magnanimous *crime* of having made her whom he so truly loved his wife.

The King left behind him several memorials of his visit. Among them, a cabinet of walnut was the chief: it rests on large spiral carved legs, and measures, without these, 3 feet 7 inches by 4 feet 5 inches. The writing-desk is arranged so as to draw out; and the entire cabinet is full of curious secret drawers. It is richly inlaid with wood, and many elegant brass figures, in addition to the royal arms. This exquisite article of furniture was removed from the Hall by Sir Charles Holte, the last Baronet, and is now in Mr. Bracebridge's possession. Six chairs, carved with the royal arms; a huge Delph mug, also bearing the same insignia; and a China bowl, 9 inches deep and 22 inches in diameter, were also left by the King. The chairs were dispersed at the sale in 1817—one of them is in the possession of the Rev. Egerton Bagot, at Pipe Hayes; the mug and bowl are at Atherstone Hall.

On the Sunday after the royal visit, the battle of Edge Hill was fought, and Edward Holte was wounded. He, however, recovered, and was engaged in August, 1643, in the defence of Oxford, and, while in the discharge of his duties there, contracted a fever, which proved fatal on the 28th of the above month. The entry respecting him, in Dugdale's Diary, (page 54,) is simple and affecting:—"Mr. Edw. Holte (sonne and heire of Sr Tho. Holte, of Aston-juxta-Bermingha') dyed in Oxford: buried in Christ Church, under ye window in ye Chappell on ye south side ye Quire, wherein ye picture of a Bishop is sett." He was buried on the 30th. The entry of his interment, from the register, (Gutch's Wood's History of the Colleges of Oxford, p. 508,) is:—"August 30: Edward Holt, Esq., heir apparent to — Holt, Bart., was buried in the south aisle joining to the choir, near to the head of Bishop King's monument." The Bishop King referred to was first Bishop of Oxford, grand-uncle of Dr. King, Bishop of London, whose daughter Mr. Holte married. A monument, in memory of this gentleman, was placed over his grave, probably by his brother-in-law. In March, 1828, a diligent search was made for it by Mr. Edward Holt, but unsuccessfully, until he was enabled, by means of a plan of the interior of the cathedral, to discover its position. The stone "is removed from where it was originally placed, and is laid on the ground, but from the great traffic over it, the inscription is completely obliterated. It is of black marble, with two white tablets inserted, the one for the armorial bearings, the other for the inscription." From the marks on the shield, it appears to have been displayed quarterly. The arms, however, are obliterated.

The sentiments of Sir Thomas with regard to his son's marriage do not appear to have changed. The old Baronet made his will in 1650, and though he bequeathed £100 to his grandson Robert and his "now wife," and to his other grandson, John, the estates at Pipe and Erdington, for life; yet as no mention is made of Mrs. Edward Holte, it may be inferred that he continued implacable. But the other branches of the Family looked on the matter in a different light. Francis, (Sir Thomas's brother,) in his will, dated July 16th, 1641, bequeathed her a gold ring; and Robert, the other brother, (will dated July, 1650,) a legacy, placing her name before that of Lady Shuckburgh; while Sir Thomas's daughter, Elizabeth, (will proved July 16th, 1647,) in the legacies she bestows on her nephews and nieces, describes them as "the sons and daughters of her sister Holte, widow," thereby expressing her esteem.

Edward Holte died at the age of forty-three. The following elegy, written by his brother-in-law, the Bishop of Chichester, and the subjoined extract from that prelate's will, afford additional information with respect to this Family quarrel:—*

* Hannah's Poems of Dr. King, Bishop of Chichester, p. 105.

AN ELEGY UPON THE DEATH OF MR. EDWARD HOLT.

WHETHER thy Father's, or disease's rage,
More mortal proved to thy unhappy age,
Our sorrow needs not question; since the first
Is known for length and sharpness much the worst.
Thy fever yet was kind, which the ninth day
For thy misfortunes made an easie way,
When th' other barbarous and hectick fit
In nineteen winters did not intermit.

I therefore vainly now not ask thee why
Thou didst so soon in thy youth's midway dy:
But in my sence the greater wonder make
Thy long-oppressed heart no sooner brake.
Of force must the neglected blossom fall
When the tough root becomes unnaturall,
And to his branches doth that sap deny
Which them with life and verdure should supply.
For parents' shame, let it forgotten be,
And may the sad example die with thee.

It is not now thy grieved friend's intent
To render thee dull Pitie's argument.
Thou hast a bolder title unto fame,
And at Edge Hill thou didst make good the claime;
When in thy Royal Master's Cause and Warre,
Thy ventured life brought off a noble skarre;
Nor did thy faithful services desist,
Till Death untimely strook thee from the list.

Though in that prouder vault, then, which doth tomb
Thy ancestors, thy body find not room,
Thine own deserts have purchased thee a place,
Which more renowned is than all thy race;
For in this earth thou dost ennoble ly,
With marks of Valour and of Loyalty.

In the will of the prelate-writer of the elegy we find the following affecting reference to his deceased relative. The will is dated 14th July, 1653, when the prospects of the Bishop were exceedingly dark:—

"Item, one other somme more than double to both these, (the first was £1,000, and the second 'a somme not less than that,') which I lent out of my purse to my deceased brother, Edward Holt, Esquire, as the Bondes by him given perticularly shew; and I recommend this, my last and earnest desire, to my worthy nephew and God sonne, Sir Robert Holt, Barronett,* that as he was born under my rooffe, and had his share in that support which for many years I cheerfully allowed his parents and their children, when the vnnatural vsage of an implacable Father denyed them competent means wher by they might subsist, soe he, being now master of a plentiful estate, will not forget the kindness which I shewed, but return it to my sones, whose provision must needs fall the shorter, since what I disbursed was taken out of their patrimony. I mention thus much without repentance of the Courtesie by me performed, or without pleading merritt for my nephew's regard towards those I leave behind, beleieving his worth such that he cannot faile in so iuste a request, which I reinforce as he expects eyther blessing from God vpon his, or fidelity of friends to himselfe; in assurance thereof that out of this great debt something will come in to discharge those remembrances I desire to leave behind me, I bequeath to my beloved Nephew, Sir Robert Holt, a seale, with all the quarters of his Family, engraven by most curious Artist, and provided by my Executors. Item, I bequeath to my deare sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Millington, formerly wife to my brother, Edward Holt, Esquire, a piece of plate of forty ounces, beseeching her to accept it as an acknowledgment of her affectionate care expressed towards me and myne during the tyme I sojourned under her rooffe: and to my worthy brother, her husband, John Millington, Esquire, I bequeath fower volumes fairely bound, being a description of the world in French, written by Pierce Avity."

The fact recorded in reference to Mrs. Millington is the most beautiful episode in the history of the Family. She was alive in 1670, as, by the will of John King, Esq., (elder son of the Bishop,) of Boycote, Kent, dated May 20th and 24th of that year, the picture of the testator's uncle, Mr. William King, was bequeathed to her. A small legacy of remembrance was also left to Sir Robert Holte.

We now return to the history of Sir Thomas. In the month of December, 1643, apprehending danger from his Birmingham neighbours, he applied to Colonel Leveson, Governor of Dudley Castle, for a guard of soldiers, and on the 18th, forty musketeers were placed in the Hall. On the 26th, (a sad exchange for the festivities of Christmas,) the Parliamentarians, in number 1,200, commenced their attack. The marks of the cannonading are still visible on the walls of the south-west wing of

* There must be some mistake in the date, as Sir Thomas did not die until December, 1654.

the building. The array brought against the Hall could not have consisted of regular troops, as the small number of the besieged—forty foot soldiers and the household of Sir Thomas—could not have defended the place for any length of time; but must have been composed of an undisciplined concourse, with a very few gunners and regular soldiers; the choice of ground for the play of the cannon showing much more skill than a mere assembly of townspeople, unacquainted with the science of gunnery, could have possessed. The attack continued on the day following, the 27th; and on the 28th, after twelve of the royalists had been killed, the gallant defenders surrendered their fortress, but not before they had inflicted a loss of sixty on the enemy. One of the balls, after piercing the wall, struck off the ornament from a pillar of the banister on the staircase, and lodged in the wall adjoining.

The Hall, immediately on its surrender, was plundered; such of the Family papers as had not been removed to a place of security were destroyed, though not entirely to the extent stated by Collins, as the numerous evidences still existing at Atherstone show. Sir Thomas was also imprisoned, but his confinement would appear to have been rather a matter of precaution than for the purpose of revenge; and, from the fact that no injury was done to any of the monuments of the Family in the adjoining church, it may be inferred that the act was one rather undertaken for the public weal than from dislike to the old Baronet.

The popular opinion is that the attack was made because of Charles being in the Hall at the time, and this impression was certainly shared in by the later branches of the Holte Family, among whom a tradition existed that the defence was prolonged for three days, to afford him an opportunity of escaping. In corroboration of this idea, they pointed, too, to the articles of furniture left at the Hall by the Monarch. But the slightest reflection will show the improbability of the supposition. Charles would never have risked his person so slenderly guarded in so disaffected a district as Birmingham. There was no purpose to serve in his making a visit incognito to Aston, nor is there the slightest reason to suppose that he did so. That wing of the building in which the King's chamber was situated was cannonaded; and as no written account of the circumstances was preserved, in process of time the royal visit and the assault-at-arms would be blended together, till they came to be regarded as events occurring at the same period. The dates, however, as given by Manley and Dugdale, are conclusive. In October, 1642, the King visited Aston, and in December, 1643, the attack was made.

Sir Thomas suffered severely for his loyalty to his Sovereign. In addition to his imprisonment, his household goods were twice confiscated, and his estates once decimated, such contributions being forced from him, that, according to Collins, "the damage he sustained was computed at £20,000." The sum named was probably a random guess, but doubtless was tolerably accurate. In the "catalogue of the Lords, Knights, and Gentlemen that have compounded for their estates," under date, 1655, the following entry respecting him occurs:—"Holt, Sir Thomas, of Aston, com. Warr., Baron., £4,401 2s. 4d."

Sir Thomas, about the close of Elizabeth's reign, purchased the manor of Lapworth from Sir Edward Greville, Knight, of Milcote; and in 1647, the manors of Pipe and Erdington from Sir Walter Devereux; and, with the latter manor, the chantry founded by the Erdingtons, at Aston. The manor of Pipe had previously formed a part of the Holte property, having been purchased from John Butler by Edward Holte. In 11 Elizabeth, (1569,) he sold it to one Dimock, from whom it went, with Erdington, to — Earle; thence to Sir Walter Devereux, who in turn sold it.

Sir Thomas was twice married; first, to Grace, daughter of William Bradburne, Esq., of Hough, Derbyshire, by whom he had fifteen children. The names of the two elder sons have been already given. The others were—Jerman, baptized December 22nd, 1601, who died in his infancy; Richard, baptized at Islington, London, October 2nd, 1604; and George, buried May 7th, 1605, who both died without issue. There was also another son, Thomas, buried at Aston, January 22nd, 1618-19.

Of his daughters, Grace, the elder, married, on 4th February, 1634-5, Sir Richard Shuckburgh, of Shuckburgh, Warwickshire, she being his third wife; and six sons and three daughters were the issue of this union, the present Sir Francis Shuckburgh being descended from this lady. Sir Richard dying in 1656, Lady Shuckburgh, in 1659, married a second husband, the particulars of which match appear in the subjoined inscription from the monument at Shuckburgh:—

"This is in memory of the Lady Grace Shvkbvrgh, who was daughter to Sir Thomas Holt, of Aston, near Birmingham, in this county, Kt. and Bart., and wife to Sr Richard Shvkbvrgh, late Lord of this Mannor, by whome she had issue six sonnes and three daughters; and after his decease, viz., 27th of Octob., 1659, tooke to her husband John Keatinge, of Norraghmore, in the county of Kildare, Esquire, then a student at Lincoln's Inn, and afterwards Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas in Ireland. She departed this life at his house in Dublin, the 12 of Aprill, 1677, and was buried in the chappell of Palmerston, three miles distant from that city, in a new vault by him there made for that purpose; who also in memory of her singular Virtue hath caused this small monument to be sett up."

Below the inscription are the arms of Shuckburgh impaling Holte. The other daughters were—Anne, who married Walter Giffard, Esq.; Catherine, Anthony Roper, Esq.; Katharine, buried August 3rd, 1605, at Islington, London;* Dorothy, baptized December 1st, 1606; Frances, of whom nothing is known; and Elizabeth. There were two other children, whose names we have failed to discover. Elizabeth, just mentioned, died April 15th, 1647, and was buried at Chaddesley Corbett, Worcestershire, where a monument was erected to her memory. By her will, proved in July, 1647, she leaves a legacy to her uncle, John Hungerford; to her nephew, Robert Holte, Esq., her buckles; to the sons and daughters of her sister Holte, widow, sundry sums, but their names are not mentioned; to her "cousin" Middlemore, of Edgbaston, a legacy; to her sisters, Lady Shuckburgh and Mrs. Giffard, a Lady Yates, Sir Thomas and Lady, and sundry other persons, sums of money to purchase rings, which she particularly requests they will wear in remembrance of her. Her father and Sir Richard Shuckburgh are the executors. The following is a copy of the inscription on the monument:—

Neare herevnder
Lycht interred the Body of
Mrs. ELIZABETH HOLTE,
One of the Daughters of Sr Thomas Holt,
of Aston, neare Byrmingham, in the covntie of Warwick,
Knt. and Baronet:
Who liveinge single departed this life on the
15th Day of April, in the Yeare of ovr Lord God
1647.
"Virescit Post Funera Virtus."

Sir Thomas's second wife was Anne, the younger daughter of Sir Edward Littleton, of Pillaton, Staffordshire, Knight, but by her he had no issue. After his death she married Charles Leigh, Esq., the third son of Thomas Lord Leigh; she died November 2nd, 1697. Her name will again occur in the history.

There is one other circumstance in the history of Sir Thomas, without a reference to which the narrative of his life would be incomplete. We refer to the charge of his having murdered his cook. The tale has been widely circulated, but in well-informed circles has always been discredited, inasmuch as popular tradition has associated with it the assumption of "the bloody hand" as a badge of disgrace. The character of Sir Thomas, as given on his monument, and shown in the erection of the alms-houses, has also been appealed to, as tending to throw discredit on the story. But the connection of the Ulster badge with the "murder" is easily explained. It was at Duddleston that the crime was committed, and it was while residing there that Sir Thomas received his title, and by consequence assumed the augmentation granted by the Crown; and an unthinking people, uninitiated in the mysteries of heraldry, immediately connected the two circumstances; and in this form the tale has been handed down to the present day. But putting this aside, we find that the charge was made in the life-time of Sir Thomas, and so deeply did he feel aggrieved that he commenced proceedings for slander against the person who made the charge. The Plea Rolls,

* From this and a similar entry referred to in the previous page, it would appear that Sir Thomas had a town residence at Islington.

(5 James I., Easter Term, roll 462) contain the particulars of the case, as follows:—At Michaelmas Term, 1606, Sir Thomas Holte, by Richard Jackson, his attorney, preferred a bill against William Ascrick,* averring that he (Sir Thomas) was a good, true, and faithful liegeman of the King, and had been so from his birth, having, on account of his good name, fame, credence, estimation, and conversation, and the favour of the King, been appointed one of the justices of the peace for the county of Warwick, as well as having received special letters patent for hearing and determining divers felonies perpetrated in the said county; in which offices he had administered justice without fear, malice, or favour. And that the said William Ascrick, being seduced and provoked by instigation of the devil, and envying the happy and prosperous state of the said Sir Thomas, did, on the 20th of December, in the third year of King James, at Birmingham, openly, publicly, maliciously, and in the hearing of divers persons, utter with a loud voice, these false, fictitious, scandalous, and opprobrious words in English, respecting the said Sir Thomas, viz., "Sir Thomas Holte tooke a cleever, and hytt hys cooke with the same cleever uppon the heade, and clave his heade, that one syde thereof fell uppone one of his shoulders, and the other syde on the other shoulder; and this I will verifie to be trewe." The damages were laid at £1,000. To this bill, Ascrick, by his attorney, John Harborne, responded at Easter Term that he was not guilty, and put himself on his country. After divers delays, the case came on for trial at Warwick, on the 13th of July, 1608, the Judges being Sir Thomas Walmysley and Sir Peter Warburton. The Jurors were William Holbache, of Corley More; Christopher Goodall, of Atherstone; John Smythe, of Great Alne; Nicholas Knight, of Barrel's Green; George Kempson, of Haselor; Thomas Hopkyns, of Moreton Baggott; Charles Wheeler, of Tanworth; Thomas Buswell, of Harborough Parva; and Richard Clever, of Napton; and as the remainder did not appear, Theophilus Wilkyns, Thomas Palmer, and Thomas Bree were added. A verdict of "guilty" was returned, and damages to the amount of £30 awarded, with one shilling costs. The entry on the roll, of which the above is an abstract, is couched in the barbarous Latinity of the period, and is full of unintelligible legal terms; the copy extends over six foolscap pages.

The case was carried by Astgrigg into the Court of King's Bench, and at Michaelmas Term, in the same year, was argued before the Judges, it being contended, on behalf of the appellant, that, although it had been stated the halves of the head fell on either shoulder, there was no averment that the man was killed; and the judgment of the Court was in his favour. The following is the account of the case as given in Judge Croke's Reports, (Grimstone's edition, 1659, Vol. 2, p. 184):—

"*SIR THOMAS HOLT versus ASTGRIGG*.—Action upon the case for words: Sir Thomas Holt struck his cook on the head with a cleaver, and cleaved his head, the one part lay on the one shoulder, and another part on the other: The defendant pleaded not guilty, and found against him; and now moved in arrest of judgment that these words were not actionable, for it is not averred that the cook was killed, but argumentative: And of that opinion was the Court, (Fleming and Williams absentibus:) For slander ought to be direct, against which there may not be any intendment: But here, notwithstanding such wounding, the party may yet be living, and it is then but trespass: Wherefore it was adjudged for the defendant."

Though the argument employed was but a quibble, it does not appear that the defendant denied his statement, and the charge was certainly tantamount to one of murder. The most probable tradition of the cause of the commission of the crime is, that Sir Thomas, when returning from hunting, in the course of conversation, laid a wager to some amount as to the punctuality of his cook, who, most unfortunately, for once was behind time. Enraged at the jeers of his companions, he hastened into the kitchen, and seizing the first article at hand, avenged himself on his domestic. It is added, also, that he afterwards sought to conceal the deed.

* The family of Ascrick was one of great respectability in Birmingham. In the list of the first Governors of the Free School, Dugdale mentions William Ascherig, though his name is omitted in the charter itself; and one of the family married, in the reign of Queen Mary, the widow of Edward de Bermingham, the last of the ancient lords of the manor of that name. The register of St. Martin's Church contains several entries respecting various members of the family. Under date of January 27th, 1562, occurs the marriage of William Askridge and Marie Symonds, probably daughter of one of the Governors of the Free School; and on April 28th, 1563, the baptism of James, son of John Askrigg. From 1610 down to 1645, entries of baptisms and deaths appear, under date of November 26th, 1617, being the record of the burial of William Askricke, perhaps the defendant to Sir Thomas Holte's action. The name appears to have been spelt in divers ways:—Askoric, Ascrick, Ascricke, Asrike, Askrike, Askricke, Ascrocke, Ascherig, Askridge, and Astgrigg.

The character of Sir Thomas, so far as his actions serve as a test, appears to have been proud, obstinate, and revengeful. At one time we find him pertinaciously refusing Sir William Dugdale fees which, as a herald, were his due; and, in the same spirit, hopelessly defending his mansion without the slightest probability of success. We see him prevented solely by the interference of the King from disinheriting his son, though he still left him in penury. And of his pride we have ample proof, in the fact of his having purchased a title at so great an expense, and of having erected a mansion, which, for magnificence, exceeded any to be found in its vicinity. And yet this proud man sought and obtained from Charles, in the first year of his reign, a royal pardon!

This document is dated at Westminster, the 10th of February, 1625-6, and has appended to it the great seal of James. It is in excellent preservation, and is in the possession of Mr. Bracebridge. It runs in the general form, so that from it nothing can be gathered as to any specific offence committed. It is so ample, that every crime of thought, word, or deed, prior to the 27th of March then last past, (the day of the death of King James,) is entirely remitted. To mention a few of these will suffice:—Lese majesty, rebellions, insurrections, conspiracies, misprisions; homicides, felonies, robberies, murders; escapes, evasions; forcible entry of houses, riots, routs, unlawful assemblies; false pleas, extortions, oppressions; forging of charters, writings, and muniments, and the publication of the same; perjuries, subornations, simulations, bribes for false swearing; abrasion, rasure, and interlineation of any rolls of the King's Courts; false weights and measures, unlawful contracts, and usury. There are certain exceptions, among which are murder on the highway, rape, forging of Government paper money, and witchcraft. The pardon might be pleaded in any court, where it was to be admitted as a complete answer to any charge prior to the date mentioned.

There is a phrase in the pardon granted to Sir Thomas which is omitted in the one granted to his grandson,—“suspected;” and though the word may have been inserted merely as a matter of form, it will doubtless be considered as at least recognising the existence of the general impression. The following is the passage:—“*Ac etiam omnes et omnimodas homicid', felon', robber', et accessar' eorundem. Ac etiam omnes et omnimodas escap' et evasiones tam voluntar' quam non voluntar' ac negligent', quorumque predict' murdratorum, homicid', et felon', aut accessar' aut suspect' eorundem.*” (And also all and all kinds of homicides, felonies, robberies, and accessories of the same. And also all and all kinds of escapes and evasions, as well voluntarily as involuntarily and negligently, and each of the aforesaid murders, homicides, and felonies, or accessories, or suspicions of the same.)

There are difficulties in the way of forming an absolute judgment on the merits of the case; but it does appear to us that a very strong degree of probability rests in favour of the opinion that the poor cook's head was cloven in twain, as charged in the libel.

If, in expressing this opinion, an erroneous conclusion have been arrived at, and if there have been a failure of that charitable construction of actions which should be shown towards all men, we can but reply that our desire has been to arrive at a proper decision, and that no feeling of prejudice has been allowed to mingle in the formation of that judgment to which we have reluctantly come.

The following letter from Dugdale, “Blanch Lyon,” to Sir Simon Archer, dated June 10th, 1639, shows that Sir Thomas was not on good terms with the great antiquary, and may, perhaps, in part account for the History of the Family in the “Warwickshire” not being more complete:—

“I was on Saturday evening wth Sr Rob. Fisher, and delivered unto him a cōpye of the letters patentes of King Edward VI., confirmed by Pliament, touchinge the p'viledges belonginge unto the officers of Armes, wherint I am now intressed, as my Lord Marshall's certificate wch I shewed him formerly doth testifye. Now, forasmuch as some of my neighbours (p'tendinge a feare that my ease might be there burden) have urged the Deputy Leiftenantes herewith, I was bold to intreate Sr Robert (whose well wishes to me I doubt not) to lett Sr Tho. Holte and the rest whom he pleaseth, understande by what authoritye I claime these immunities; and I shall take it for a great favour that you will please to take notice thereof to Sr Robert, who will ther shew you the cōpye I delivered him. And I doubt not of their wisdomes (beinge satisfied fully therein) but that they will continue a p'portionable ease to the constabularye, forasmuch as the King's immunity to us doth not intend a chardge on others in leiu thereof.”

Sir Thomas outlived all his children, with the exception of Lady Shuckburgh. He died in December, 1654, being buried on the 14th of that month, aged eighty-three. He was buried with

his ancestors at Aston; a rich mural tablet, at the apex and base of which are placed shields emblazoned with the numerous armorial bearings obtained by matrimonial alliances, being dedicated to his memory. The inscription is as follows:—

H. S. E.
 THOMAS HOLTE, Eques et Baronettus,
 Quibus titulis a Iacobo Imo.
 Ob patriæ amorem, vitæ integritatem,
 Morum candorem, erga Principem fidem,
 Erga pauperes liberalitatem, erga omnes iustitiam,
 Insignitus est.
 Flagrans bello civili,
 E re sua familiari his confiscatâ, et decimâ parte semel proscriptâ,
 Quicquid reliquit Fanatica Rabies
 Caroli I. (cui Edwardus filius a cubiculo fuit)
 Incarceratus fuit, in subsidium contulit.
 Tandem vero Ædes Astonianæ nobili magnificentia extruxit.
 Nec tamen egenis defuit,
 Quibus hospitium pari munificencia vicinum condidit:
 Eximia ingentis animi monumenta.
 Cujus memoriæ alterum hoc monumentum
 Non super vacaneum censuit
 Carolus Holte, Baronettus, pronepos.
 Duas habuit uxores, Gratiam, Gul. Bradbourne,
 De Hogh, in Agro Derbiensi, arm., filiam et cohæredem,
 A quâ quindenam suscepit sobolem.
 Sed nullam superstitem præter Gratiam, Rich. Shukburghi,
 De Shukburgh, in Agro Warwicensi, militis, uxorem:
 Annam, Edv. Littletoni, de Pillerton,
 In Agro Staffordiensi, Baronetti, filiam,
 Quam sine prole reliquit viduam.

Obijt anno { .Ætatis sue LXXXIII.
 { Sal. Hum. MDCLIV.

(Here lies buried Sir THOMAS HOLTE, Knight and Baronet, by which titles he was, on account of the love he bore to his country, the integrity of his life, purity of his morals, fidelity to his Prince, liberality to the poor, and justice towards all, honoured by James the First. During the raging of the civil war, although imprisoned, he contributed to the cause of Charles the First (to whom his son Edward was chamberlain) from whatever fanatical fury had left him; his property having been twice confiscated, and once taxed to the amount of one-tenth. Nevertheless, he erected Aston Hall with a noble magnificence; nor was he wanting towards the poor, for whom, with similar munificence, he built the neighbouring hospital: both worthy monuments of his exalted mind. To whose memory it has not been thought vain to erect this additional memorial, by Sir Charles Holte, Bart., his great-grandson. He was twice married: First, to Grace, daughter and co-heiress of William Bradbourne, of Hogh, in the county of Derby, Esq., by whom he had fifteen children, of whom none survived him except Grace, wife of Sir Richard Shukburgh, of Shukburgh, in the county of Warwick, Knight. Secondly, to Anne, daughter of Sir Edward Littleton, of Pillerton, in the county of Stafford, Bart., whom he left a widow, without issue. He died in the 83rd year of his age; in the year of human redemption 1654.)

A roll of parchment, 11 feet long by 6 inches wide, being "A true and perfect inventory of all and singular the goods, cattells, and chattells of Sir Thomas Holte, late whilst hee lived of the parish of Aston-juxta-Birmingham, in the county of Warwick, Knight and Barronett, deceased, taken and priced the twentieth day of November, in the yeare of our Lord God one thousand six hundred fiftie and fower, by Gilbert Littleton, John Walter, Robert Whitehall, Richard Martin, and Augustin Walker," still remains. The value of the furniture in the different apartments is very small, and only to be accounted for on the supposition that the damage occasioned at the time of the assault in 1643 was never repaired. A few items are subjoined:—

	£.	s.	d.
In primis in the great hall the furniture there, priced at	004	18	0
Item in the great parlor, the furniture there, priced at	004	08	4
Item in the chamber betweene the great stayes and open roome, and in the three little roomes by the greates stayes, the goods and furniture there, priced at	004	10	0
Item in the winter parlor, the furniture there, priced at	016	11	8
Item in the best lodginge chamber and under chamber to the same, the furniture there, priced at	003	01	8
Item in the second best lodginge chamber, the furniture there, priced at	024	16	8
Item in the great dining roome and in the withdrawinge roome, the furniture there, priced at	003	13	4
Item in the gallerie and space at Sir Thomas his chamber dore, the furniture there, priced at	006	10	0
Item in the best chamber over the hall, the inner chamber over the hall, and in the middle roome over the hall, the furniture thereof, priced at	081	11	0
Item in the greene Kittermister stuffe chamber, and in the other Kittermister stuffe chamber, the furniture thereof, priced at	006	15	0

The furniture in the kitchen, &c., was priced at £22 10s. 8d.; in the dry and wet larders, 2s. 3s.; in the wine and beer cellars, £7 1s. 8d.; and in the buttry and pantry, £24 14s. The linen was valued at £48 11s.; and the wearing apparel, books, and ready money of the deceased, £600. The "cattle, horses, mares, coltes, sheepe, swyne, and pullin of all sorts about the howse" were priced at £301 16s. 8d.; the "corne of all sorts in the barnes, and hay," £159; the waggons and tumbrels, £16; and the contents of the saddle and coach houses and stable, £22 8s. 4d. The total value was £1,631 15s. 6d.; and the inventory was proved the 2nd of April, 1655.

In addition to the account of Sir Thomas's will in a previous page, it may be mentioned that there was also a codicil. By the former, the real estates were devised to trustees for twenty-one years, to pay certain legacies, and erect the alms-houses, but there is no devise over of the estate. By the codicil the testator devises his manors of Erdington and Pipe to his grandson John and his heirs male, but subject to the trusts of the will, and payment of the legacies. Though John was killed before his grandfather's death, the codicil was not altered.

The alms-houses, which have been adverted to in a previous page, were not erected till the year 1655-6. The following inscription over the centre of the building records their history:—

THIS ALMS HOUSE WAS BY THE CHARITY OF SR THOMAS HOLTE, LATE OF THIS TOWNE & COUNTY, KNIGHT AND BARONET, DECEASED, PROVIDED FOR AND APPOINTED TO BE BUILT, AND WAS, IN ORDER THERETO, ACCORDINGLY ERECTED BY HIS GRANDSONE AND HEIRE, SR ROBERT HOLTE, BARONET, IN YE YEARES OF OVR LORD GOD 1655 & 56.
LAVS DEO.

And there they still remain. Time has stamped on their lineaments some traces of his flight, but has left unimpaired their power to comfort and to bless. In these havens of rest, after the storms of work-day life, an asylum is still to be found; and though the powerful Family under whose sheltering auspices these humble dwellings nestled, has sunk into decay, yet they remain—a monument more enduring than brass or marble could supply.* By a deed poll, dated June 1st, 1655, Sir Robert confirmed his grandfather's grant.

Edward Holte, the father of Sir Thomas, it was remarked in page 17, had three sons. The second, Francis, resided in London, and is styled as of that city in his will dated July 16th, 1641. He leaves to his good brother Sir Thomas, to his brother Robert, to his nephew Edward, and to his niece Mrs. Elizabeth Holte, a gold ring each, that of Edward Holte being of the value of 15s. The third, Robert, was in the commission of the peace for the county of Warwick, in 1639, (14 Charles I.) He was the author of two works, dated respectively 1612 and 1640: the one is a collection of materials for a general geography; the other a biography of Scripture characters, with their contemporaries, on a plan somewhat resembling that of Prideaux's celebrated "Connections." Each work is in two thin volumes, and they are now in the library at Atherstone. In his will, which is dated July, 1650, he is styled of Warwickshire. He leaves to his brother Sir Thomas a gold ring, value 20s.; "and if he should die, to my nephew his heir, whose son he be;" he also leaves legacies to Mrs. Elizabeth Holte and Lady Shuckburgh.

On Christmas Eve, an amusement, of which the following is a description, was observed at the Hall, and if not introduced in the life-time of the first Baronet, was kept up in his day:—

"As soon as supper is over, a table is set in the hall; a brown loaf, with twenty silver threepences stuck on the top of it, a tankard of ale, with pipes and tobacco; and the two oldest servants have chairs behind it, to sit as judges, if they

* Sir Aston Cokayn, author of the "Chain of Golden Poems," wrote a poetical address to Sir William Dugdale, on the publication of his "Warwickshire," in which the following lines occur:—

Maugre the rage of war or time to come,
Aston shall flourish till the general doom;
And the Holt's progeny shall owe as much
Unto your lines, as him that made it such.

please. The steward brings the servants, both men and women, by one at a time, covered with a winnow sheet, and lays their right hand on the loaf, exposing no other part of the body; the oldest of the two judges guesses at the person, by naming a name, then the younger judge, and lastly the oldest again. If they hit upon the right name, the steward leads the person back again; but if they do not, he takes off the winnow sheet, and the person receives a threepence, makes a low obeisance to the judges, but speaks not a word. When the second servant was brought, the younger judge guessed first and third, and this they did alternately, till all the money was given away. Whatever servant had not slept in the house the preceding night forfeited his right to the money. No account is given of the origin of this strange custom, but it has been practised ever since the Family settled there. When the money is gone, the servants have full liberty to dance, sing, and go to bed when they please.*

XVII.—SIR ROBERT HOLTE, the elder son of Edward, succeeded his grandfather. He inherited the loyal feelings of his ancestors, and "did his best endeavours for the restoration of the royal line." In the year 1660 he was appointed High Sheriff for the county, the patent for that office under the great seal, and the commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant, of the same year, still remaining. In the following year, he was elected member for the county,† and was one of the Commissioners appointed to cause the Coventry city walls to be destroyed, he being present when the demolition was effected, on the 22nd of July. On the 28th of February, in the same year, the royal pardon was granted him, his only crime being that of having lived under the government of Oliver Cromwell. These pardons, which were empty farces, calculated only to render the granter contemptible, were bestowed in great profusion. One is mentioned, in Leicestershire, where three baronets were grouped together. Sir Robert's (which is in Mr. Bracebridge's possession) is in a beautifully neat hand, but full of contractions. The seal which was appended has been accidentally broken, and the fragments alone remain. Humiliating, indeed, must have been the spectacle for high-born English gentlemen, who had spent blood and treasure on behalf of the Stuarts, and whose hearts had ever throbbed with loyalty to their cause, to stoop to receive pardons for bowing to a stern necessity, before which he who affected to forgive them had been obliged to succumb. But the silly show was gone through, and men who held the royal commission were solemnly pardoned their rebellions, conspiracies, and treasons, and had their properties restored to them, which no treason of theirs had ever forfeited.

In 1662, Sir Robert was again appointed Deputy Lord-Lieutenant, others being joined with him in the commission; and in the same year a commission of the peace under the great seal was also issued to him. In the following year, (1663,) we find a commission, signed "Northampton, Master of his Majesty's Leash," directed to him, authorising him to "take and seize greyhounds, bracks, and chippets, and other dogs, for the use and disport of his Majesty, as in the time of King Henry VIII., Queen Elizabeth, King Edward VI., and King James, his Majesty's grandfather."

Sir Robert was twice married. His first wife was Jane, daughter of John, son of the first Lord Brereton, of Brereton Hall, Cheshire. He wedded this lady about 1646, her portion being £4,000. She was great aunt to Francis, the fifth and last Lord Brereton, who, dying without issue in 1722, the noble Elizabethan mansion and large estates of the Breretons became the inheritance of Sir Clobery Holte, the grandson of Jane, wife of Sir Robert. This estate remained in the hands of the Family till the death of Sir Charles Holte, and, indeed, till the Act of Parliament for settlement of the Holte and Bracebridge property, which was passed in 1817. Brereton Hall and Park were leased by Sir Charles to Mr. Bracebridge, and there that gentleman and his family resided till about 1814.

* Gentleman's Magazine, February, 1795, p. 110.

† The following letter has reference to the entrance of the Dutch into the Medway and Thames, when, according to an eye-witness quoted by Carte, the "consternation and confusion in the looks of all men" were greater than during the Plague and the Fire:—

"Warwick, 5th July, 1667.

"Bobsie,
"Provide your purse, and send it into the Chequer; the Dutch cannot be beaten out without it. And lett me knowe what time you thinke of going upp to London, that wee may meete before. I will bee there at the first sitting, (God willing,) and so must every one that will doe good. My service to my best Sister, and all the Family. I am,

"Your undoubted friend,

"For Sr Robert Holt, Bart.,
At his howse at Aston, neare Burmingham."

"F. PUCKERING.

Sir Robert's union with his lady was not of long duration. She died in March, 1648, in child-bed of her son Charles, afterwards third Baronet, and was buried in St. Clement's Danes, London. His second wife was Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Smith, Knight, of Hough, Cheshire, and widow of George, son of Thomas Cotton, of Combermere, in the same county. By her he had seven children: four sons and three daughters.

Sir Robert was on terms of intimacy with the celebrated Izaak Walton, and to him the Angler dedicated his first separate edition of the life of Dr. Donne, in 1658. In nearly all the editions of the great preacher's life, this dedication has been omitted, though it has been, we believe, restored in a late issue. The following is an extract:—

"To you, sir, do I make mine addresses for an umbrage and protection, and I make it with so much humble boldnesse as to say 'twere degenerous in you not to afford it. For, sir, Dr. Donne was so much a part of yourself as to be incorporated into your Family by so noble a friendship, that I may say there was a marriage of souls betwixt him and your reverend grandfather, (Dr. King,) who, in his life, was an angel of our once glorious Church, and now no common star in heaven. And Dr. Donne's love died not with him, but was doubled upon his heire, your beloved uncle, the Bishop of Chichester, that lives in this froward generation to be an ornament to his calling. And this affection to him was by Dr. Donne so testified in his life, that he then trusted him with the very secrets of his soul; and, at his death, with what was dearest to him, even his fame, estate, and children. And you have yet a further title to what was Dr. Donne's, by that dear affection and friendship that was betwixt him and your parents, by which he entailed a love upon yourself, even in your infancy, (Dr. Donne died March 31st, 1631,) which was encreased by the early testimonies of your growing merits, and by them continued, till Dr. Donne put on immortality; and so this mortall was turned into a love that cannot die."

Again:—

"My desire is, that into whose hands soever this shall fall, it may to them be a testimony of my gratitude to yourself and Family, who descended to such a degree of humility as to admit me into their friendship in the dayes of my youth; and notwithstanding my many infirmities, have continued me in it till I have become grey-headed; and as Time has added to my yeares, have still increased and multiplied their favours."

This friendship, so honourable to both parties, arose from the circumstance of Walton having been a parishioner of Dr. Donne, who was on terms of intimacy with Bishop Henry King.

Sir Robert appears to have disliked the Puritan Nonconformists. The following extract from Baxter's Life (edited by Sylvester, 1696, folio, lib. 1, part 2, p. 380, sec. 266) presents him in the rather unenviable light of a persecutor:—"About the same time, Sir Robert Holt, a Knight of Warwickshire, near Birmingham, spake in the Parliament House against Mr. Calamy and me by name, as preaching or praying seditiously, but not one syllable named that we said. And another time he named me for my Holy Commonwealth." Calamy also mentions Mr. Wilsby, the ejected minister of Wombourn, as having been "much troubled" by Sir Robert. Strange, indeed, it was, that sedition should be charged on men who had been royal chaplains, and had refused bishoprics for conscience sake; and whose prayerful lives were the best refutation of so unjust a charge.

Sir Robert would appear to have been in straitened circumstances, in consequence of the losses sustained by the Family in the civil war. In 1655 and 1658, he mortgaged several manors for the sum of £5,000, a transaction that will be referred to hereafter. The papers relative to them are in the British Museum Library, ticketed "816.—M. 5.—81.—Holt—Papers relating to." One of his creditors was named Prideaux, who obtained judgment in an action; and Sir Robert, being outlawed, was arrested, and confined in the Fleet Prison. On the 16th of February, 1676, (the day after the assembling of Parliament,) he communicated to the House by letter "that he was detained prisoner in the Fleet, at the suit of Mr. Edmund Prideaux, and thereby hindered from attending the service of the House." A petition from Mr. Prideaux was also tendered and read, and, after a debate, in which an adjournment to the following Monday was negatived by 154 to 143, the case was referred to a Committee. On the 22nd of the same month, the Committee of Elections and Privileges were ordered "to take the same into their consideration the first business this afternoon, and to report the same, with their opinions thereon, to the House; and they are to search precedents in the case." Accordingly, on the 2nd of April, the Committee reported that they had agreed to "two votes or resolves," as follow:—

"That it is the opinion of this Committee, that Sir Robert Holt, a member of this House, now prisoner in the Fleet, and taken in execution, out of privilege of Parliament, be not discharged from his imprisonment, by virtue of the privilege of Parliament.

"That it be reported, that the outlawry after judgment is another good cause why Sir Robert Holt ought not to be discharged by privilege of Parliament."

On the question being put, the report was negatived by 122 to 97, and the following resolutions were agreed to:—

"That Sir Robert Holt shall have the privilege of this House.

"That Sir Robert Holt be delivered out of the custody of the Warden of the Fleet, to attend the service of this House.

"That Sir Robert Holt be delivered from such custody, by sending the Sergeant at Arms attending this House, with the mace, to bring him to the service of this House."

The matter does not appear, however, to have been settled, for, on the 22nd of March following, a petition was presented from Mr. Prideaux, but as Sir Robert was not present, it was ordered to be presented on the following Tuesday, and Sir Robert to have notice to attend. Accordingly, on that day the "petition of Edmund Prideaux and Susannah his wife, complaining against Sir Robert Holt," having been presented, Mr. Prideaux was called to the bar, and owned the petition, whereupon Sir Robert, "standing up in his place, desired that he may have a copy of the said petition, and some reasonable time given him to put in his answer thereto in writing," which being acceded to, "Monday after Easter week" was appointed for that purpose. On the 30th of April, it was ordered that the answer should be put in by "Monday next." No further entry respecting the matter appears, so that arrangements were probably made for a settlement.*

Lady Holte was buried on the 18th of June, 1679; and Sir Robert on the 3rd of October, in the same year, his age being about fifty-four. He was buried with his first wife. Strype, whose edition of Stow was published in 1720, makes no mention of any monument to his memory, so that, in all probability, one was not erected.

Edward Holte, the father of Sir Robert, had a younger son, John, a Gentleman Commoner of Balliol College, Oxford, where he died, unmarried, October 23rd, 1653, and was buried in Magdalen Parish Church there. Guillin thus narrates the accident that proved fatal to him:—"The occasion of his death was this: Coming on horseback from Hedington, near Oxon, there met him, on the way called Smallman's Cross, one Tho. Pelham, M.A., and Fellow of New Colledge, (sometime a captain in the Parliament army,) both whom struggling for the way, Pelham unhors'd him; so that his horse trampled on his breast and belly: He dy'd about three or four days after, of his wounds."† The daughters were—Grace, married to George Hampson, M.D., a younger son of Sir Thomas Hampson, Bart., of Taplow, Bucks; Elizabeth, to a gentleman named Duncombe, of Surrey, and afterwards to a London merchant named Richbell; Letitia, to John Hugford, Esq.; and Catharine, to — Kittermister, and afterwards to Sir Edward Nevill, Knight, of Grove, Nottinghamshire. The following reference to three of these ladies occurs in the will of Bishop Henry King:—"Item, I bequeath to my three neeces, Grace, Elizabeth, and Catherine, daughters to my eldest sister by her first husband, Mr. Edward Holte, the somme of five pounds to each, 'entreating them with it to buy some small remembrance of their godfather, who heartily blesseth them." Probably Letitia died before the Bishop's will was made, so that her name could not of course be mentioned in it.

It has been remarked that Sir Robert's children by his second wife were seven in number: four sons and three daughters. Of the former, Ferdinando, and Thomas, buried December 21st, 1684, are supposed to have died without issue. The third, Robert, was elected a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, when Dr. Hough was reinstated President, in 1688. He remained in the University till his death, in 1720. Several letters in his handwriting remain, addressed to his niece, Mrs. Foley, of Stourbridge. One of them states that he has received an invitation from the Bishop of Worcester,

* Journals of the House of Commons, Vol. IX., pp. 384, 387, 411, 460, 461, 472.

† Guillin's Heraldry, ed. 1722, folio, p. 75, (quoted from Anthony Wood.)

(Dr. Hough,) to visit him at Hartlebury, and anticipates the pleasure with which the reverend writer will meet his niece. But a sad accident, detailed in the following letter from the Bishop, deprived him of his life in an awfully sudden manner:—

"Sr.—It is with no small trouble I give you account of a sad accident that has befall'n us this day. Mr. Holte bought a new horse on Monday or Tuesday last, and, being desirous to make tryal of him this evening, he got upon his back about five of ye clock, and rode him about leasurely in ye park; but it was not long before ye horse took an head, and ran directly to ye stable, where, stopping short, his master fell from his back, and lay in appearance dead. Mr. Hector* was in ye house, and blouded him immediately, and so soon as he could be gotten into his chamber, apply'd other remedies proper to stop an inward bleeding which the fall had occasion'd; but all in vain, for about nine he dyed, and I dare say will be lamented by all that knew him. I presume, Sr, you will direct Mr. Foley to order his funeral, with whom I shall then discourse of other matters.

"Sept. ye 15th, 10 at night."

"I am, Sr, yr most obedient and most faithful servant,

"Jo. WIGORN.

A letter from Sir Charles to Mr. Foley, dated Baginton, September 16th, requests that gentleman to have the corpse buried at Hartlebury, "considering yt his gross body cannot keep;" and also to ascertain if there were a will. Another letter from Sir Charles, also to Mr. Foley, dated the 21st, says:—

"I am much obliged to you for yr trouble you have given yorself about my brother Holte's unfortunat death. I will send one over to wait on my Lord Bp., and beg leave he may be informed how accounts stand between his Lordship and my brother. I presume, if I administer, I must have a valuation made of his personal estate, or ye court will not allow of it. I desire yr advice in this, wherin you will oblige

"Yor affect. Father and humble servant."

The complete indifference of Sir Charles, as evinced by his two letters, is painfully apparent. The inventory amounted to £409, besides thirty-eight guineas and half-guineas, and some silver medals. The original documents, from which these particulars are taken, are in the possession of J. H. Dixon, Esq., of Oldswinford, whose courtesy in permitting the use of them we take this opportunity of acknowledging.

Sir Robert's fourth son, by his second wife, was Edward, described by Collins as living in 1684, but of whom no further mention is made. A reference to him will be found in a later portion of the work. The daughters were—Elizabeth, wife of William Hemings, of Worcester, a member of the Society of Friends, 1692; Anne, and Catherine. Collins makes a general remark that no issue of any of the children by this marriage was surviving in 1714.

XVIII.—SIR CHARLES HOLTE succeeded to the Family honours on the death of his father. He was born on the 22nd of March, 1648, and spent the earlier part of life with his maternal relatives. He studied for several years at Oxford, in which University he took the degrees of A.M. and M.D. He married, August 5th, 1680, Anne, the elder daughter of Sir John Cloberry, Knight, of Bradstone, Devonshire, and of Winchester.† A memorial of Sir John remains at Atherstone, in the form of a beautifully embossed silver salver, twenty-four inches in diameter, with his arms in the centre. This is accompanied by six other pieces, of a like pattern, with the arms of Holte and Cloberry; so that probably the former was a marriage present to Sir Charles Holte, and the six latter pieces added to it, immediately on his marriage, by his worthy father-in-law.

In 1682, Sir Charles was placed in the commission of the peace for Warwickshire; in 1683, he was appointed Deputy Lord-Lieutenant; in 1684, he was again appointed to the same office; and in 1685, was chosen member for the county. In the same year, he was again a Deputy Lord-Lieutenant; and another commission, nominating him to the same office, was granted in 1686. We find him to be one of the magistrates who allowed the scale of wages for the county of Warwick, of all manner of artificers, appointed at the quarter sessions "uppon Tuesday next after the close of Easter, in the six and thirtieth year of the raigne of our Soueraigne Lord Charles the Second."‡

* A Birmingham surgeon.

† Sir John, who was an intimate friend of General Monk, was knighted by Charles II. on his arrival in London. He married Ann, daughter of William Cranmer, grandson of Edmund, Archdeacon of Canterbury, who was brother of the Archbishop. A stately monument marks his grave in Winchester Cathedral.

‡ Archaeologia, Vol. XI., p. 206.

Sir Charles is described, on his monument, as a man of letters, and well beloved in his county. He is also stated to have been much devoted to the study of medicine, which he practised with great success, restoring many to health, who, but for his humanity and skill, would have fallen a prey to death. In addition, he compiled many notes on medical subjects, but his diffidence caused him to commit them to the flames. Two of his papers—one "Of a disease caused by swallowing stones," and the other "Of a child that had its intestines, mesentery, &c., in the thorax"—were published in the Philosophical Transactions, about the year 1699. He is further described as a kind and indulgent husband, a provident and loving parent, and a bright example of piety and charity. By his prudence, he is stated to have repaired the breaches caused by the civil war, and to have left to his descendants an estate, not merely restored, but greatly augmented.

When Sir Charles succeeded to the Family estate, he found it greatly encumbered. His painful position, in reference to a mortgage of his father's, led him to present a petition to the House of Lords for a private bill, which was acceded to, and the bill carried through its various stages, and sent to the Commons. On the 11th of January, 1693-4, Sir Charles presented a petition to that House, in which it is set forth

"That the petitioner's father, in 1655 and 1658, mortgaged several manors to James Perrott, gent., for securing £5,000, and, as a collateral security, acknowledged a recognisance in Chancery for £8,000, which mortgage and recognisance were, in 1664, assigned to Andrew Fountaine, Esq., for £5,000, as his own money. That, in 1672, the executors of John Coke, Esq., claimed the said £5,000, as part of his personal estate, placed out in Mr. Fountaine's name, in trust for Mr. Coke, and, after ten years' contest, and several hearings in the Exchequer, obtained a decree against Mr. Fountaine for the said money, and that he should assign the said mortgage and recognisance to them, and decreed the said executors to be executors in trust for Edward Coke, Esq., an infant now living. That Edward Coke obtained a decree, in Trinity Term last, against the petitioner, to pay what was due on the said securities, by Michaelmas, 1694, or be foreclosed of the equity of redemption. That Mr. Fountaine hath stood in contempt of the said decree for eleven years, and will not assign the said mortgaged estate, but has received near £3,000 out of the rents thereof, and petitioner has been compelled to pay £5,000 more for interest, and is desirous to pay what is due, and yet is like wholly to lose his estate, because he is disabled to sell, and can have no remedy, as advised, by the present laws, or otherwise than by Act of Parliament. And, praying that leave may be given for the bringing in a bill for divesting the said securities out of Andrew Fountaine, Esq., and others, and vesting the same in trustees, for raising and paying the money remaining due upon the said securities, and assigning the residue of the estate, encumbered therewith, to the petitioner."

The subject was referred to a Committee, on whose report leave was given to bring in the bill, which was read a first and second time. Petitions against the measure were presented from Mr. Fountaine, (who asserted, that if it passed, he should lose a rent charge of £1,000 a year, and his fortune with two wives, amounting to above £10,000,) and Mrs. Ann Gwavas, widow of William Gwavas, who had been an executor of John Coke, and who claimed the property as devised under Mr. Coke's will. In this petition the assertion is made that "Mr. Fountaine, having, by surprise, gotten the mortgage deeds of Sir R. Holt's estate, set up a title thereto (for the £5,000) for himself." These petitions were referred to the Committee on the bill, who presented "a state of the case" to the House. The following are the main features:—In or about June, 1664, Sir Robert Holte mortgaged an estate of £700 per annum, to Fountaine, for £5,000. The dispute between Fountaine, Mrs. Gwavas, and Coke, is as to the ownership of the mortgage money, and as to Sir Charles Holte, his endeavour is only, upon payment of the money, to have his estate again. Mr. Coke claims as heir of John Coke, to whom Fountaine was only a trustee, and Gwavas an executor in trust; and that his claim has been adjudged by a decree of the Exchequer Court, and affirmed, on appeal, by the House of Lords. Mrs. Gwavas insists that her husband was not only an executor, but a devisee, of the personal estate of John Coke, and though there was a decree in the Exchequer against her view of the case, she might be relieved of it, and, therefore, her right ought to be saved by the bill. Mr. Fountaine contends that the money was paid by Gwavas, who was agent for both Fountaine and Coke; that the latter had given him several releases of all accounts and demands, and was privy to his (Fountaine's) settling this mortgage money, among other things, as a provision for his wife and children; boldly accuses both the Court of Exchequer and the House of Lords of injustice; and concludes by asserting that the bill will take away "the chiefest means he hath for the getting of the said mortgage money." The report concludes as follows:—

"By the disputes of the several pretenders to the ownership of this money, it being uncertain, during the contest,

who it belonged to, the debt swelled up to £12,083 13s. 4d.; and Sir Charles Holt, in pursuance of several orders of the Court of Exchequer, hath paid £7,800, and unless he pay the residue, viz., £4,189 9s. 8d., by Michaelmas next, he is, by the decree of the Exchequer, to be foreclosed of his equity of redemption of an estate of £700 per annum. For the ownership of the mortgage money being, even in the last court of appeal, adjudged against Mr. Founteine, he cannot pay the money to him; and, unless he pays it to Mr. Coke, he is to lose his estate: And yet, unless he has the estate, in law, out of Mr. Founteine, he cannot raise the money by the estate, or settle his estate upon his wife and family."

Appended were two resolutions that the passing of the bill would not prejudice the claims of Founteine and Mrs. Gwavas; and the amendments were agreed to. However, on the question being put, "That the bill, with the amendments, be engrossed," it passed in the negative, so that the bill was rejected.* Doubtless, an arrangement was made between the claimants, which led to this result, as we cannot find any reason for supposing that any portion of the estates was alienated. The eulogy on the monument—"avitas possessiones hæredi reliquerit, non modo in integrum restitutas, sed et multo auctiores"—was indeed well deserved.

The Latin Bible of Sir Charles has the following entries, in his handwriting:—

"Augt. 5, 1680.—Marryed to Ann, ye eldest daughter of Sir John Clobery."

"Aug. 19, 1681.—My eldest son was born abt. $\frac{1}{2}$ past 4 in ye morning, and on ye 6th of September he was christened at Aston Church, by Thomas Yardley, Vicar, by ye name of Clobery; his grandfather, Sir John Clobery, being one of his Godfathers, and Simon Ld. Digby ye other, his Godmother, ye Lady Holte, second wife to his great great grandfather, Sir Thomas Holte, Knight and Barronet."

Then follows the like record of Ann, his second child, Sir John Bridgeman and Mrs. Wyrley, and Lady Clobery, grandmother of the child, being sponsors. The register at Aston describes the infant as having been born and baptized the same day, August 23rd, 1682; but the Latin Bible gives the date of the christening as September 11th.

Jane, the third child, was born November 10th, 1683, baptized November 12th, by the register, but, by the Bible, christened November 26th, Sir John Wyrley and the Right Hon. the Lady Brereton and Lady Puckering being sponsors.

"Mary, my 4th child, was born on Thursday, about 3 o'clock in the morn, being the 20th of November, in the year 1684, and was christened on Monday, the 8 of December, in the Parish Church of Aston, by Mr. Yardley; her Godfather being Mr. William Cranmer, my wife's uncle, and her Godmothers, my sister, Catherine Clobery, and Mary, the wife of Humfrey Jennens, Esq." The register gives the date of the baptism of this child as January 1st, 1684-5.

Charles, born February 28th, 1686, and christened March 16th. The register gives the date of baptism, February 28th.

Susanna, born April 15th, 1688, christened May 2nd.

Katerina, or Catherine, born May 16th, 1689, christened May 31st. The register makes it June 7th.

Francis, born February 8th, 1690, christened February 24th.

Celena, or Selena, born September 12th, and christened September 27th, 1693.

John, born December 24th, 1694, christened January 7th, 1694-5.

Diana, born August 8th, and christened August 25th, 1697.

Elizabeth, born November 16th, and christened December 5th, 1698.

The whole of the entries are in Sir Charles's handwriting, with the names of the godfathers and godmothers at full length.

By an indenture of January 10th, 1720, power was given to certain trustees to raise £10,000, for the education and portion of the younger children of Sir Charles, should there be more than four;

* Journals of House of Commons, Vol. XI., pp. 53, 55, 60, 66, 74, 75, 76, 110, 116, 121, 126, 130, 137, 188.

if but four, to raise £8,000; if but one, two, or three, £6,000. This money was raised, and by a deed of December 14th, 1723, an acknowledgment of receipt of the several amounts was signed by the children of Sir Charles to their mother.

Sir Charles held no public appointment after the abdication of James II., a circumstance which tends to confirm the tradition that he was a Jacobite. His name, however, does not occur in the list of non-jurors published in 1715, so that he must have taken the oath, probably soon after the crown was settled on William and Mary. The words on his monument, "erga regem fides intemerata," may, perhaps, refer to his attachment to the House of Stuart. He took part, however, in the affairs of the town of Birmingham, as his name appears among the defendants in the suit relative to the Free School there. The Governors having been induced to surrender to Charles II. the original charter of Edward VI., a new one was granted, but some of the outed parties commenced proceedings against Sir Charles and the other Governors holding office under the new charter. They were defeated, however; but, carrying the case on appeal to the House of Lords, succeeded in obtaining the reversal of the decree of the Court of Chancery, and the restoration of the original charter in 1690-1.

Sir Charles was in a declining state of health some years previous to his decease, and the letters of his lady and daughters constantly express their apprehensions on that subject. He died on the 15th of June, 1722, and was buried on the 18th of the same month, at Aston, a mural monument to his memory, erected by his widow, bearing the following inscription:—

H. S. E.
CAROLUS HOLTE,
De Aston, in Agro Warwicensi, Baronettus,
Qui natus xxii die Martij, anno mdcxlviii,
Denatus est xv^o Junii, mdcxxii.
Primarum nupsiarum filius, patrem habuit Robertum Holte,
Baronettum, matrem Janam Brereton, neptam Gulielmi Dni
Brereton, Baronis de Laughlin, in Regno Hibernia,
Cujus prænobili Familia teneram fere exequit ætatem, ubi amoris
Et in Deum et in Patriam, ijs imbutus est, Principijs quibus
Futurum erat, ut sequentis vitæ decursu splendido
Uteretur ab ijsdem nunquam desesseret.
Universitate Oxon. per complures Annos studijs vacavit, ubi
Magistratus in Artibus in Medicina Doctoratus suscepit gradus: huic
Facultati ideo potissimum incubuit, quod post æternæ salutis curam
Hominibus utilissimum fore duxit confecto cruciatu agrotantes
Sublevare per peritiam in re medicinali, medicamenta etiam egenis
Suppeditando, plurimos ad sanitatem reduxit qui morbis occubuerant,
Nisi eorum inopia pariter ac adversæ Valetudini piæ subvenisset.
Multa quoq. quæ in medicis ac physicis accuratissime
Notavit, penum locupletasset publicum, nisi
Modestia nimis injuriosa ea omnia
Igni devovisset.
Per antiqua e stirpe ortus, quum familiæ suæ dignitati præesset,
Republicæ munia istius modi viris deferri solita ita obivit, ut in
Ijs fungendis, erga Ecclesiam Anglicanam pietas spectatissima,
Erga Regem fides intemerata, publicæ simul libertatis studium
Acerrimum, Jurisq. exquisita et castissima
Administratio semper effulserint.
Hospitio usus est, per quam liberali, ea tamen prudentia, rem
Familiarem gessit, ut avitas possessiones flagrante rebelione raptas,
Et vastatas ingentibus insuper quo regias partes defenderint, majorum
Impensis haud parum imminutas, hæredi reliquerit non modo in
Integrum restitutas, sed et multo auctiores.
Blandissimus erat atq. indulgens conjux, Pater providus et
Amantissimus, lucidum pietatis et charitatis exemplar.
Dignus deniq. qui inter optimos viros
Jure merito, nec uno nomine,
Annumeretur.
M. S.
Monumentum hoc posuit
Vidua ejus Anna, filia primogenita et cohæres
Johannis Clobery,
Wintoniensis, in comitatu Hantoniæ, equitis, ex qua
Filios quatuor Filiasq. octo suscepit; horum
Filius natu maximus,
Clobery Holte,
Baronettus, titulum atque
Rem paternam
Possidet.

(Here lieth buried Sir Charles Holte, of Aston, in the county of Warwick, Bart., who was born on the 22nd of March, 1648, and departed this life the 15th of June, 1722. He was the son of Sir Robert Holte, Bart., by his first wife, Jane Brereton, grand-daughter of William Lord Brereton, Baron of Laughlin, in the kingdom of Ireland, in whose noble family he spent a great part of his youth, and where he was imbued with those principles of love to God and his country, which were to guide him in the splendid course of his future life, and from which he never departed. He pursued his studies, for several years, at the University of Oxford, where he took the degrees of Master of Arts and Doctor of Medicine. He was the more strongly devoted to this pursuit, because, next to the care of their eternal salvation, he considered it most beneficial to his fellow-creatures, to relieve them from the anguish of bodily disease. By his skill in medical science, and by supplying the poor with medicine, he restored many to health who would have fallen a prey to disease, had he not charitably administered relief, both to their wants and infirmities. The public, also, would have been greatly enriched by his writings on medical and philosophical subjects, had not his too scrupulous modesty doomed them to the flames. Sprung from a very ancient family, and surpassing, in dignity, all his ancestors, he so ably discharged the duties of those state offices which are usually confided to men of his rank and worth, that, in the performance of them, his marked attachment to the Church of England, his unshaken fidelity to his Sovereign, his ardent love of liberty, and his pure and impartial administration of justice, ever shone conspicuously. He was remarkable for his hospitality, and yet conducted the affairs of his household with so much prudence, that, notwithstanding the family estates had been much impaired during the flagrant Rebellion, partly by the violence of plunderers, and partly by the liberal support his ancestors had rendered to the royal party, he left them to his heir, not only restored to their former value, but also much augmented. He was a most tender and indulgent husband, a prudent and affectionate father, a bright pattern of piety and charity, and, finally, worthy, on more accounts than one, of being ranked amongst the best of men. This monument, sacred to his memory, was erected by his widow, Anne, eldest daughter and co-heiress of Sir John Cloberry, of Winchester, in the county of Hants, Knight, by whom he had four sons and eight daughters. The eldest son, Sir Cloberry Holte, Bart., possesses the title and family estates.)

Sir Charles's will is very brief, being comprised in about six lines. It was proved in 1723. All the personalty was left to his wife, who was appointed sole executrix. Lady Holte died in February, 1737-8, aged eighty-nine. Her name will again occur in a subsequent portion of this History.

The names of Sir Charles's children have been already given. Of the younger sons, Charles was a member, as founder's kin, of Magdalen College, in the University of Oxford, where he filled the office of Proctor in 1715. The following extract, from an undated letter to Mr. Foley, refers to him:—"About a week since, dear Charles went to finish his lecture at Oxon, deliver it up into ye Vice-Chancellor's hands, and make a compliment to the electors for their kindness to him." He took the degree of D.C.L. at Oxford, in or about 1720, when the like distinction was conferred on his brother Cloberry. By his will, proved January, 1724-5, he bequeathed £20 to Magdalen College, and if he died at Oxford, £70 was to be expended on his funeral, but if elsewhere, his interment was to be as private as possible. He died unmarried, in or about 1723.

To Francis, Sir Charles's third son, many references occur in the Foley correspondence. By his imprudent course of life, he had ruined his health and impaired his fortune. His father's letters show the alienation that had taken place. One, dated March 19th, 1719-20, says:—

"Deare Nanny, I received this letter this morning; and if your brother Frank will not take care to give Porter some satisfactory answer to this debt, which is of long standing, he will be taken up in a small time."

31st March, 1720:—"I really doe not understand what you say of your brother Frank, yt he intends in a day or two, to be at Aston. You further say yt you believe he had noe other thought than to beg your and my mother's advice for ye most proper way to settle his affairs. I wish, deare Nanny, you would explain this to me, for I know nothing of his affairs more than yt I have paid some hundred pounds to settle his affairs, to noe purpose. I will trouble you noe further on this melancholy subject. Frank's behavior and idle way of living has bin a great affliction to yer mother and me. You and all persons may see to what a condition this young fellow has reduced himself by his way of living."

His sister Elizabeth thus writes:—"I am now concerned for him, because he is got in one of his raking fitts. He went away last Thursday morning, and has not been heard of since. I pray God he may not be picked up and sent to gaol." The following (undated) shows deep sympathy:—

"I think him, indeed, to have a great aversion to my father and mother, and that makes it very hard for any body to do him service with them, and I am certain they will never be brought to meddle in his affairs, and truly all I can ask of them is to relieve his necessities; and if we can keep him out of prison, he must be contented to take whatever they see good, or expect no further favours from them. I hear nothing as to what my brothers will do for him, nor indeed what they can do for him; and the only comfortable thought I now have, is that I have done my endeavour to keep him out of a gaol till the rest come home, and indeed I know it is to no purpose to do any more, unless the debts be taken up, for if he can lye hid he'll be sued to an outlawry, and then both his person and his estate will be seized on."

A letter from Cloberry, under date December 26th, (the year is not given, probably 1721,) says:—

"I was with him all day yesterday, and thought him very ill. His chief complaints are a cough, and weakness

and lowness of spirits. * * My father seems not to apprehend him to be in great danger, and I heartily wish he may not prove mistaken. As soon as I see what is likely to become of poor Frank, I designe to wait on you."

He lingered till December, 1723, dying unmarried. By his will, dated February 12th, 1717, and proved in January, 1724, he appoints his loving brother Clobery executor, to whom he bequeaths his estates in the county of Southampton, to his sister Selena, "my emerald ring," and the remainder, "particularly an estate called Bowmers, in Castle Bromwich," to his sisters Anne and Selena.

John, the fourth son, was of Christ Church College, Oxford, and attained the degree of LL.D. He married Elizabeth, elder daughter of Thomas Legh, Esq., of Bank, Lancashire. She died at Sutton Coldfield, May 16th, 1750, and was buried at Ripple. Doctor Holte, who had no issue, was Vicar of Bishop's Itchington, Warwickshire, September 18th, 1721; Rector of Ripple, Worcestershire, November 21st, 1727; Archdeacon of Salop; and Domestic Chaplain to Dr. Hough, Bishop of Worcester. Dr. Holte gave, by will, £20 to the poor of Ripple, the interest of which sum was to be applied by his successors for the benefit and relief of the most deserving poor. He built, also, a comfortable and substantial rectory house, to which reference is made in the inscription on his monument. The Bishop of Worcester gave his license for the erection, on the 26th of April, 1729. He died December 22nd, 1734, and was buried at Ripple, where a monument bearing the following inscription is placed to his memory:—

Within this Church are deposited the Remains of
JOHN HOLTE, LL.D.,
Who departed this life December 22, 1734.
He was son of Sir Charles Holte,
Baronet, of Aston, in the county of Warwick, and
Dame Ann, his Wife; by whom, after
a Prudent and Religious care bestowed on him in
his tender years, he was placed at Christ
Church College, in Oxford.
In this seat of Learning, by an eager application to
the most useful Studies, and a remarkable sweetness in
His Temper, he became dear to all who had the care
of his Education or the Happiness of his
Acquaintance.
Hence he was at length call'd forth to perform the
Offices of his holy Function, and was first presented
to the Vicaridge of Bishop's Itchington, in the County of
Warwick, then to the Rectory of this Church, and after-
wards constituted Archdeacon of Salop,
Which several preferments he look'd upon as so
Many Calls and Occasions to do good, rather
than Opportunities of accumulating Riches.
Of this, the Hospitality he constantly used, his
Extensive Charities to the Poor, both during his
Life and at his Death, and the Edifice he has raised
to the benefit of his Successors in this Rectory,
are evident and Particular Proofs.
He Married Elizabeth, Eldest Daughter
of Thomas Legh, Esqr., of Bank, in
the County Palatine of Lancaster, who, deeply
sensible of the constant and most tender affection
of her dear Husband towards her, and the
irreparable loss she has sustained in his Death,
Erected this monument to his memory.

On a flat stone in the chancel of Ripple Church is the following inscription:—

Here lyeth the body of
JOHN HOLTE, LL.D.,
Who died December 22nd, 1734,
Aged 40.
Here also lyes
The remains of Elizabeth,
Mentioned in the Monument above,
Relict of the late Dr. Holte,
to whom she was
a most affectionate
and faithful
Wife.
She departed this life May 16th, 1750,
Aged 47.*

* For copies of these inscriptions, as also for other information with reference to Dr. Holte, we are indebted to the Rev. G. H. Clifton, Rector of Ripple, to whom, as also to the Rev. A. P. Lovekin, Curate of Bishop's Itchington, our acknowledgments are due.

Several letters of Dr. Holte's still remain. They are all dated from college, and show him to have been a man of a genial and hearty temperament, and possessed of strong common sense. His correspondence presents him in a very favourable light.

Sir Charles's elder daughter, Anne, married, January 27th, 1718-19, North Foley, Esq., of Stourbridge; and the Foley papers and correspondence, in the possession of Mr. Dixon, reveal a state of things painful in the extreme, and highly discreditable to Sir Charles. Shortly after the marriage, Mr. Foley was called upon to pay debts contracted by his wife previous to marriage, which he discharged, to prevent exposure, but communicated the circumstance to Sir Charles, expecting reimbursement. The following extract of a letter, addressed to one of the young ladies by Mr. Foley, also reveals another transaction not calculated to heal the breach:—

"The first day I waited upon Sir Charles Holte, when I had told him what my estate and debts were, he ask'd me what fortune I expected. I told him I heard he would give each £3,000, or more. He said he could, in his present circumstances, give but £2,500, and that there would be some difference in his daughters' fortunes, and asked which I desired. I told him I could not be particular, for I had only seen them that day at dinner;* but never heard more from him, but by others, that my wife had money of her own; and after several visits I wondered none of the family had ever mentioned it to me, even when the writings were drawing. I then told my wife I heard she had money of her own. She said she had; and (I) ask'd what hands it was in. She told me that it was in her father's, viz., a bond of £600, gave her by her grandmother, and another of £100, (I think,) gave her by her grandfather." * "I as much believed I should have that money as marry, and was surprised very much, when I ask'd my wife, after I was married, to see the bond. She told me that her father had made her bring the bond for £600, and deliver it to him, telling her that he had gave me security for it. I told her if she had asked my advice, she should not have parted with it. She answered again, how could she help it? Mr. Burgh had given his opinion, in a case then depending in the family, that parents might do what they pleased with their own children. I never heard of any condition that it was delivered upon. When I was last at Aston, upon my saying to Sir Charles I thought I had no need to ask anything about debts, when I heard my wife had money of her own, he said he had told my wife that money must be part of her fortune; and if I had said it had been delivered up upon a condition without my consent or privy, I believe I should have been charged with reflecting, though that's the least you pretend to make of it. That you may make no more doubts nor strained constructions on what I write, I say, once for all, I will not pay any debts contracted before marriage, unless I can be forced to it."

There is no date to this letter, but the last sentence, without doubt, refers to a demand made on Mr. Foley for the sum of £140, on a bond of his wife's. He paid a year's interest, in the hope that Sir Charles would discharge the debt, who refused; and, within little more than two months after Mrs. Foley's death, a bill was filed in chancery, at the suit of Joan Jorden, widow, of Birmingham, against Mr. Foley. The latter put in a replication; but though no papers remain to state the result, it is clear the husband would have to pay the debt. On the back of the brief is a statement by the defendant's attorney, (ex parte, of course,) from which the following extract is taken:—

"Sir Charles Holte was very severe, and did not allow his children sufficient supplies for necessities. Defendant had very good reasons to believe his late wife, by money borrowed, supplied herself, and assisted her fellows, (sisters.) She only having £700 of her own liable to her debts, and the others, being entirely dependent, could give no security. Defendant, when tradesmen gave him bills, when he had no previous notice of such demand, usually blamed his wife for not discovering all her debts, and the occasion of contracting them, which she always refused, and endeavoured to conceal them. Defendant paid tradesmen's small bills rather than expose his wife, but applied to her father and family about it; but when this bond debt and gross sum were demanded, his wife refusing to discover the reason of it, defendant resolved openly to apply to Sir Charles and family to discharge it; but being unwilling, in the meantime, publicly to expose the affair, paid the interest, and kept the blank bond, and with intent to be executed, in case he could receive satisfaction or security from Sir Charles Holte or some of his late wife's family, which they put off during her life, and when she died, they refused, defendant being then deprived of any possibility of necessary discoveries, in order to a satisfaction from any of them."

The bond, it is stated, was not discovered till two years after the marriage, when Mrs. Foley was near her confinement, and her family thought there would be issue to inherit under the marriage settlement. Mr. Foley paid debts contracted by his wife, for clothes and other necessities, nearly seven years before her marriage. One of his letters, dated March 3rd, 1721, enquires if Sir Charles will pay the debts, and if not willing, asks, "May I be at liberty to give my reasons to the creditors and all our friends why I refused to pay them? and assure you, that if Sir Charles thinks it for the honour and interest of himself and family they should never be paid, I will make myself as easy as I can, under it." The letter, however, does not appear to have effected the purpose intended.

* A tolerably convincing proof of Mr. Foley's motives in selecting the elder daughter. The amount received by him was £2,500.

Many of the bills of this lady remain, but they all appear to have been paid long before the marriage, and not one of those that caused so much unhappiness exists. We give two, as specimens:—

Nov. 14, 1707.—	For making a diamond cross	...	...	£1	10	0
June, 1708.	For a diamond locket ring	...	...	1	3	0
	And for a ring, with a pearl and two garnetts	...	...	0	18	0
1709.	For mending her watch	...	...	0	3	6
				£3	14	6
Dec. 26, 1709.—	For a feather muff	...	...	£00	14	00
	For a box	...	...	00	00	10
Jan. 26.	For a cherry cull'd embroidered handkerchief	...	...	00	17	00
	For a pr of blk tabby sticht stays	...	...	01	18	00
Feb. 6.	For a pair of steel buckells and snappin	...	...	00	09	06
	For a knot and a box	...	...	00	02	06
				£4	1	10

Mrs. Foley was buried at Oldswinford, on the 26th of October, 1721. A surrender of the property on which her settlement was secured was made by her brother Cloberry; and "an Inventory of the goods that were Mrs. Anne Holt's, before she married with North Foley, Esq.," taken May 12th, 1724, and amounting to £10 10s. 6d., is the last in the series of papers referring to this lady, whose domestic happiness was so deeply embittered by the imprudences to which reference has been made.

Jane, the second daughter, died, unmarried, at Bath, November 26th, 1718, and was buried at Aston. Her will was proved in 1723.

Of Mary, the third daughter, more than a passing allusion is required. She lived nearly to the age of seventy-five, and (probably from having survived all her sisters, except one) died possessed of considerable property, which she bequeathed chiefly to her two nephews. The last codicil of her will, highly characteristic of a single lady of good family and independent means, of that period, is dated October 17th, 1757. She says, "Also I give to my said nephew, (Sir Lister,) my cabinet, which was King Charles the First's, also my large Bible and Common Prayer Book, with the works of the Whole Duty of Man, all in folio." These are now in Mr. Bracebridge's possession. And again:—"To my sister Mackenzie, the sum of 100 pounds in money, also my worked bed and hangings, in the room over the best parlour, also the chairs in the said room, and my India quilt, also my set of dressing plate for a lady's toy light." After bestowing an annuity of £10, she goes on:—

"Also I give and bequeath to my servant, Mary Audley, as a further reward for her faithful services for upwards of thirty years, all my wearing apparel, of what nature and kind soever, together with such of my household goods as follow, to wit, all the furniture of my own lodging room, except the cabinet before mentioned, which is given to my nephew, Sir Lister Holte, in lieu of which I give her the old cabinet with drawers, standing in the chamber over the parlour. Also I give the said Mary Audley all the furniture, chests, tables, and chairs, belonging to all the closets in or about my own lodging room; also one long mahogany table, six chairs, the seats covered with crimson stuffed damask, one frame for pewter, with drawers, standing in the laundry, twelve pewter dishes, five dozen pewter plates; also one-half of the kitchen utensils, and half the brewing vessels in the brewhouse and cellars, and one-half of my household linen; one pair of standing candlesticks, of French plate, and one hand candlestick, of silver, one nest, with three castors and cructs, one pair of salt cellars, six silver spoons, six tea spoons, one preserving spoon, and any one of the beds in any of the garrets, with feather bed and furniture belonging to it, which she shall choose, it being my desire that if the said Mary Audley be my servant at the time of my decease, to enable her to live comfortably, without being necessitated to seek for other service. Also I give and bequeath to my servant, Sarah Audley, an annuity of ten pounds, * * * also * * * my bed of green camlet, together with the feather bed and quilt, and eight chairs in the Hall; also one pair of candlesticks, of French plate, one pair of silver salt cellars, and one of the beds in the garrets. Also I give the said Sarah Audley two pairs of sheets, two table cloths, and two dozen napkins. I give to whosoever shall be my cookmaid, and whoever shall be my manservant, at my decease, five pounds in money. * * * The rest and residue of my estate, to my nephew, Charles Holte."

At the commencement of the will, she states:—"I desire my body may be decently buried in the side of the great chancel in Aston Church, belonging to Sir Lister Holte, Bart."

A proof of the zealous loyalty of this lady, as well as of her assiduity, and great skill in female accomplishments, exists in the tapestry worked by her, with the assistance of some of her sisters, for the room in which King Charles slept, at Aston. This beautiful specimen of needlework long

hung on the walls where those who revered the memory of the hapless monarch had placed it, and was removed from Aston to Atherstone, where it is still to be seen. It entirely covered the wall, where not interrupted by the bed, the fire-place, and the windows. It is worked in cross-stitch, and the brilliant colours are still fresh, being disposed with great taste. The chief design, which is very bold, may be described as an orderly profusion of bright flowers, among which appear genii bearing baskets of flowers; through an oval bocage heads and demi-figures appear, with, occasionally, birds and grotesque masks. Round the whole is a rich wide border of varied flowers, amongst which, at equal distances, are many tablets. These each contain a shield with the Holte arms, quartered with some one quartering of the nine in the carpet to be presently described, alternating with a view of some temple, lake, lodge, or grove, in the parks of Aston and Brereton. The principal pieces are 9 feet 3 inches high, the one being 17 feet 10 inches wide, and the other, 11 feet 8 inches. In the centres are medallions worked in tent-stitch. One of these medallions, which is 5 feet by 3 feet, contains an exact view of the front of Aston Hall; and the other, which is 4 feet 2 inches by 3 feet 2 inches, contains a similar representation of Brereton Hall. This great achievement of female taste and industry bears the devotional inscription:—

“God be the Guide, and the work will abide.”
“Mary Holte, Spinster. Aged 60.—1744.”

The carpet, which is in cross-stitch, is 14 feet 6 inches by 8 feet 10 inches, and is ornamented with rich and varied groups and wreaths of large flowers, in every variety of bright colour and tasteful contrast. In the centre is a medallion, 5 feet by 3 feet 8 inches, containing the Holte arms, with nine quarterings, a baronet's helme, and the Family crest (a squirrel proper) and motto. This exquisite specimen of female skill is also preserved at Atherstone. A few letters written by this lady remain, but they contain nothing worth extracting.

Susanna, the fourth daughter, died March 1st, 1700, in her twelfth year; and Katherine, the fifth, was buried December 5th, 1696, aged seven years. Selena, the sixth, died unmarried, being buried August 5th, 1727: her will was proved in November of the same year. The letters of this young lady show that the laxity of manners brought in at the time of the Restoration was not completely out of vogue in 1720. Lady Cloberry, who had mixed much with the courtiers of the time of Charles II., appears to have resided constantly at Aston about this time, and to her, probably more than one of the young ladies were indebted for initiation into a freedom of language anything but becoming female modesty. Diana, the seventh, died September 9th, and was buried September 12th, 1724, her will being proved June, 1726. A monument to her memory, at Aston, bears the following beautiful inscription:—

In the Vault underneath is
Deposited
The body of DIANA HOLTE,
Daughter of Sr Charles Holte, Bart., and Dame Ann,
his Wife.
She was born on the 8th day of Augst,
In ye year of our Salvation 1696,
And haveing fought ye good fight,
Kept ye faith, and finisht ye course,
obtained eternal life, whereunto she was called
on ye 9th day of September, 1724,
In memory of
Whose exemplary virtue,
and most dutifull and affectionate behavior to her parents,
Her afflicted Mother
caused this marble to be erected.

The eighth daughter of Sir Charles was Elizabeth, who married Jas. Mackenzie, of Worcester, M.D. She died a widow, in Scotland, in May, 1772. Her letters show her to have possessed a large fund of playful irony, and much of her correspondence with Mr. Foley is of a keenly satirical character.

XIX.—SIR CLOBERY HOLTE succeeded his father in the Family honours. In Sir Charles Holte's Latin Bible, though not in his handwriting, is the following entry:—“Cloberry Holte, Esq.,

son and heir of Sir Charles, was married 7th of July, 1719, to Barbara Lister, of Whitfield, Northampton." She was the daughter and heiress of Thomas Lister, Esq., who was cupbearer to Queen Mary. In May, 1720, in consideration of the settlement of £2,000 made upon Miss Lister's marriage, the manor and advowson of Whitfield, with the manor and capital messuage of Overbury, Northamptonshire, were conveyed to Sir Charles Holte; and in December, 1723, they were sold for £13,000 to the Provost, Fellows, and Scholars of Worcester College, Oxford. By the death of Lord Brereton, in 1722, the great estates of that family, in Cheshire, came into possession of Sir Cloberry, but Colonel James Tyrrel, of Shotover, Oxfordshire, disputed his claim. The result of the suit, in 1727, was in favour of Sir Cloberry.* This gentleman did not live happily with his lady, as the following glimpse into his private life, taken from a letter of Bishop Hough,† an intimate friend of the Family, to Mrs. Knightley, and dated July 2nd, 1729, testifies:—

"The Widow Lady Holte is now at Hartlebury, with her two grandsons, who * * * are fine boys, beautiful, sensible, and well-behaved, and I wish poor Sir Cloberry may long be happy in them; for I know no other domestic comfort he is likely to enjoy. His estate is much increased, but he seems to have no pleasure in it, and his lady (whom I am told he passionately loves) seldom is at home, or satisfied when she is there."

On the 24th of the same month, Sir Cloberry was laid with his ancestors. He marked his sense of his wife's conduct by leaving her a legacy of only £10; his personality was to be equally divided between his two sons; to whom "his honoured mother," Dame Anne Holte, was appointed guardian, and in the event of her death before they became of age, she was invested with power to name a successor. His will was proved on the 2nd of August, 1729. It has been already stated that he was a D.C.L. of Oxford. His few letters remaining show him to have been a kind-hearted man, and worthy of every honour that could be paid him. He never took any part in public affairs, having a strong sympathy for the Jacobite cause.

Of the affection of Lady Holte for her grandsons, the following is given as a proof. It is an extract from a letter by the Bishop to Mrs. Knightley, dated March 22nd, 1730-1, (page 29):—

"Towards the end of the last summer, the smallpox came into this neighbourhood. * * * It was very fatal in some families, and Lady Holte fetched her grandchildren from this school, (Hartlebury,) for fear of infection; after Christmas she sent them hither again, when we thought the disease had taken leave of us; but it broke out afresh in two or three houses, and on Saturday her coach returned for the young gentlemen. I cannot blame her Ladyship's tenderness; but the children were desirous of staying here, and had no apprehensions of the distemper; and perhaps it were better for them to have taken their chance now, than when they were grown up."

An extract from an indenture, dated July 29th and 30th, 1735, made by Dame Anne Holte, shows the opinion she held of her daughter-in-law, Lady Barbara, who had married, as her second husband, William Brinker, Esq. Certain property, at Lapworth and other places, was assigned to the Rev. Strensham Master, Vicar of Aston, and others,

"Upon trust that he or they should permit the said Sir Lister Holte (he was then fifteen years of age) and his assigns to receive the rents and profits of the said trust estate during so long time of the said term of ninety-nine years as the said Sir Lister Holte should not permit the said Barbara, wife of the said William Brinker, to reside for more than seven days successively, or for a longer time than fourteen days within 365 days, in the mansion house called Aston Hall, or in any other house whereof the said Sir Lister Holte then was or thereafter should be seized or possessed, nor with the said Sir Lister Holte at any other place."

After the commencement of any such residence, the rents and profits were to revert to Charles; in default, to Mary Holte; and after her decease, to Sir Lister and his assigns. This clause, in so direct contravention of the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother," can never be too strongly condemned. Dame Anne, though she revoked several parts of the indenture, never abrogated the clause just quoted. She was buried at Aston, February 6th, 1737-8. Her will is dated August 1st, 1735, and was proved at Canterbury, March 16th, 1737-8. She also bequeathed

* The following is an extract from a letter of Bishop Hough's to Lady Kaye, dated April 13th, 1727:—"Madam, I have deferred my humble thanks for your Ladyship's last letter longer than I should otherwise have done, that Mr. Byrche might have the honour of presenting it; who is called up to Westminster Hall, upon a great trial at law betwixt Sir Cloberry Holte and Colonel Tyrrel, about the Brereton estate. The jury is to consist of Staffordshire gentlemen, and he could not obtain to be excused from being one." Colonel Tyrrel was, subsequently, a Lieutenant-General, and Governor of Gravesend and Tilbury Fort.

† Wilmot's Life of Bishop Hough, p 276

£400 for the purchase of an estate, the rents of which were to be divided in bread and clothes among poor parishioners, but the money was never invested. £20 were paid annually by Mr. Legge, while in possession of the Hall, and afterwards by Mr. Digby, the proceeds being applied for the benefit of the alms-people. Mrs. Walter Henry Bracebridge, who inherits, by will of Mr. Digby, the Erdington estate, "also contributes to the comforts of the alms-people in the same manner and to the same amount." (Commissioners' Reports.) We believe that to this lady is also conceded the nomination of the inmates. By a reference in the will, it would appear that Duddeston Hall was used by Lady Holte as a residence, up to the date of her death.

The portrait of Lady Barbara, as already given, is drawn from Bishop Hough's letters, whose information would be derived from Lady Anne. They are corroborated, however, by Sir Clobery's leaving his wife only £10, and appointing his mother guardian of his two sons. The extract from the deed of 1735, executed by Lady Anne, also affords confirmation. But her few letters still in existence (written in a beautifully neat and clear hand) show Lady Barbara to have been a person of so highly cultivated a taste and refined a mind, and display so deep a feeling of regard for her husband, that we feel compelled to hesitate before accepting the conclusion the circumstances alluded to would imply. That her manners and sentiments would be distasteful to her mother-in-law may readily be inferred, from the circumstance of her father having been in the court of William and Mary, and, therefore, not only more correct in his morals than a courtier of the time of Charles II., but also more favourably inclined to the principles of religious liberty. The strong bias displayed by Lady Anne must cause her testimony to be received with caution, while the letters of Lady Barbara, written without reference to anything beyond the passing events of the day, are not open to any such objection.

XX.—SIR LISTER HOLTE succeeded his father. From an entry in his grandfather's Latin Bible, it appears he was born on the 26th of April, (no year is stated,) and from the register, that he was baptized on the 28th of the same month, 1720. The following entry respecting his brother also occurs:—"Charles, the second, was born 24 Nov., 1721; his Godfathers, the Rev. Father in God, John Hough, Ld. Bishop of Worcester, Will. Bromley, of Bagington, Esq., and Mrs. Cartwright, wife of Tho. Cartwright, of Aynho, Northampton, Esq." The entry is not in the handwriting of Sir Charles.

Sir Lister and his brother were, as boys and young men, devotedly attached to each other. They were at school together when young, and afterwards studied at Magdalen College, Oxford; and, for years, were scarcely ever separated. One of Bishop Hough's letters, (p. 229,) dated February 11th, 1737-8, addressed to Lady Lewisham, refers to Sir Lister, and shows the affection, strong in death, entertained by his grandmother:—

"The widow Lady Holte died on Tuesday last, and, I am told, has engaged the Earl of Dartmouth in the affairs of the Aston Family, as far as he will please to concern himself in them. Sir Lister Holte is now as much master of his estate as a gentleman under age can be. He is eighteen, and lives at Oxford in a very respectable manner. I take his lands to be not less than £4,000 per annum; he is * * * really very agreeable, and if Lord Dartmouth thinks fit to bestow his daughter upon him, everybody in that neighbourhood thinks it may be convenient, and a happy match on both sides."

The articles of agreement for marriage with the lady referred to—Lady Anne Legge—are dated October 5th, 1739, but, as Sir Lister was not of age, no settlement could be made; it was agreed, however, that when he attained his majority he should settle a jointure of £1,500 on his lady, her fortune being £6,000; but no settlement was ever made, the lamented death of the young wife obviating the necessity for one. The marriage was solemnised in the month of October, 1739. She died at the end of June, 1740, and was buried at Aston on the 2nd of July. Worthy Bishop Hough, in a letter to Lady Kaye, (p. 241,) thus refers to this melancholy event:—

"You are troubled, Madam, for the loss of Lady Ann Holte, and I believe so young a person could not be more universally deplored than she has been, but she is happier than the best of her friends can wish her; it is only the weakness of human nature, in spite of their judgments, that moves their passions on her account. Poor Sir Lister is the object, the only proper object, of our pity! for I really think there is not a more sorrowful widower than himself.

He was, to my knowledge, a true lover before marriage; and as the lady's good qualities opened upon him, they heightened his esteem; every day discovered something that was a new cause of endearment; and to be unexpectedly deprived of all at once, is a trial too great for a young philosopher. Indeed, I am extremely concerned for him: his relations are apprehensive his present situation may make too deep impression upon his fancy, and think it not advisable for him to continue in the melancholy scene. I am by no means a friend to those excursions that our nobility and gentry make into foreign countries, at their first setting out in the world; but, upon this occasion, I think it is convenient for a gentleman to go from home; and when he mourns in good earnest, it is well if any place can give him ease."

Sir Lister early mingled in the political world. On the 25th of June, 1741, he was elected Member of Parliament for the city of Lichfield. In the same year he purchased the market tolls, the property of the Corporation, and gave them for the common benefit of the city. He also contributed towards the erection of a market house.* His liberality, however, was not duly appreciated, for at the next election, in August, 1747, he was rejected by a majority of thirty-five votes, the successful candidates being—Gower, 278; Anson, 272; and the unsuccessful—Holte, 237; Vernon, 229.

Sir Lister, about the middle of July, 1742, married Mary, the younger daughter of Sir John Harpur, Bart., of Calke, Derbyshire; she is described by a local paper of the day as "a lady of great fortune, and possessed of all the valuable accomplishments that adorn her sex."† From a deed, dated July 16th and 17th, we find that her fortune was £10,000, and £2,000 additional on the death of her mother; that her jointure was £1,000 per annum; and there was a proviso, that if she died before Sir Lister, he might charge the property burdened with her jointure with £400 per annum for another wife. Some difficulties arose in the course of making this settlement, and Charles Holte came forward to remove the obstacles that were in the way, and at once proffered his consent to any fresh settlement of the Family estate that might be considered necessary. The deed for this purpose is dated June 30th, 1742, and is briefly as follows:—By indenture between Sir Lister, of the first part; Richard Bannister, of St. Dunstan in the West, London, gentleman, and Francis Musson, of the parish of St. Giles, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, gentleman, of the second part; and William Noel, of the Inner Temple, London, Esq., and John Eardley Wilmott, of the Inner Temple, London, Esq., of the third part; it is witnessed that for the "docking, cutting off, and barring of all intails and estates tail" theretofore made or limited of the several manors and hereditaments thereafter mentioned, and of all reversions and remainders thereon dependent or expectant, and also in consideration of the sum of 10s., the said Sir Lister Holte did grant, bargain, and sell unto the said Richard Bannister and Francis Musson, their heirs and assigns, the estates named in the indenture, to hold the said manors, hereditaments, and premises to the said Richard Bannister and Francis Musson, their heirs and assigns, for ever, to their only proper use and behoof, for ever, to the intent and purpose that they might be and become perfect tenants of the immediate freehold and inheritance of all and every the premises, until a good and perfect common recovery, with double voucher, might be perfected of the said manors, hereditaments, and other premises, in which the said William Noel and J. E. Wilmott should be demandants, the said Richard Bannister and Francis Musson tenants, and the said Sir Lister Holte vouchee, who should vouch the common voucher. Declaration that immediately after such common recovery should be perfected of the premises, as aforesaid, the said common recovery and the execution thereof, and the recited indenture, should enure to the only proper use and behoof of Sir Lister, his heirs and assigns, for ever, and to and for no other use, intent, or purpose whatsoever. The deed was attested by two witnesses as to the execution by Sir Lister, and Messrs. Bannister, Musson, and Noel, and by one witness as to the execution by Mr. Wilmott. It was also enrolled in the Common Pleas, (Roll 6,) in Trinity Term, 16 Geo. 2, (1742;) and in the same term there was an exemplification of recovery, Noel and Wilmott being demandants, Bannister and Musson tenants, and Sir Lister first voucher, who vouched over the common vouchee.

* "In October, 1741, Sir Lister Holt, Bart., one of the Members of Parliament for the city, gave £500 to the Corporation, desiring that £400 of that sum should be applied to exonerate the markets from toll, and that the remaining £100 should be applied towards rebuilding, altering, or making additions to the Town Hall. It was therefore ordered at Common Hall, October 27th, 'That this city shall, from Christmas next, be discharged from all tolls whatsoever upon market days, except pickage.'"*—Harwood's Lichfield*, p. 356.

† *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, July 26th, 1742.

Mr. Hutton, in his brief allusion to the Family, speaks of Sir Lister having starved his brother into compliance, and of having wantonly cut off the entail, and given away the estate; and, in making Sir Lister's father apostrophise him from the tomb, adds, "The ungenerous attorney, instead of making your absurd will, ought to have apprised you of our sentiments, which exactly coincide with those of the world, or how could the tale affect a stranger?" An attention to facts and dates will show Mr. Hutton's errors. Charles was born November 24th, 1721; the deed was dated June 30th, 1742, before he had attained his majority. Consequently, he could not do any legal act, however willing he might be to do so. And as to being "starved into compliance," under his father's marriage settlement he was heir to £4,000, and to £4,000 more left him by his grandmother, who was entitled to raise that sum should she survive her husband, which she did, the indenture being dated January 10th, 1720. The same lady also bequeathed to him a farm at Lapworth, worth £104 per annum; and he also received additional property under her will, as well as having expectations from his aunt Mary, who was possessed of a considerable fortune, which ultimately came to her two nephews, in 1758; so that had the force spoken of been used, he would, besides his own resources, have received powerful assistance from his aunt, in resisting it. The truth is that Mr. Hutton has proceeded on the assumption that the entail was cut off in 1769, and has confounded events which did occur about that time with the abrogation of the entail, and has thus gone astray himself, and misled his readers likewise. Great injustice has also thus been done to the character of Sir Lister, in ascribing to him the application of improper means which he never resorted to. The brothers continued on the most affectionate terms, and this, too, shows the incorrectness of the statement.

In 1745, when the great grandson of him who had been received with such distinguished honour at Aston, a century before, was in full retreat northwards, Sir Lister was so zealous in furnishing horses to pursue him, that he supplied 250 from his own stables and parks; and to so great an excess did his loyalty run, that he even sent his own carriage horses. His zeal would, perhaps, have shone to more advantage, had he accompanied his stud. The date of this chivalrous transaction was Sunday, December 8th, and was, as it richly deserved to be, chronicled in a *Gazette* extraordinary.

In 1755, Charles Holte married Ann, the daughter of Pudsey Jesson, Esq., of Langley, Warwickshire, the articles of marriage being dated May 19th, and the marriage took place the same day. Sir Lister, however, had previously been called to part with his second wife, she having been buried at Aston, July 25th, 1752. His domestic afflictions increased his yearning towards his faithful and tender brother, who loved him with an affection as pure and disinterested as one relative could feel for another; and, with a view to promote his brother's happiness, Charles, entirely regardless of his own pecuniary prospects, recommended a third marriage. Unfortunately, however, he did not approve of the lady selected—Sarah, the younger daughter of Samuel Newton, Esq., of King's Bromley, Staffordshire. The articles of agreement for marriage were dated June 20th, 1755, Miss Newton's fortune being £2,000; and the marriage took place in July. By an indenture of lease and release, dated July 19th and 20th, 1756, Sir Lister settled an annuity on his wife of £700.

The characters of Lady Holte and her sister-in-law were not congenial. The former was haughty, cold, and selfish; and the high spirit and keen wit of the latter could ill brook the assumption of superiority indulged in by Lady Holte. The foundation of discontent being thus laid, an open quarrel soon ensued, the effects of which speedily became apparent. By an indenture of May 10th and 11th, 1758, Sir Lister took advantage of the power conferred on him by the deed of June 30th, 1742, and made a settlement of his estate by which his infant niece was cut off from any participation therein. The estates were settled, first, to Sir Lister, and his heirs male; in default, to Charles, his brother, and his assigns, for life; with remainder to the first and other sons of Charles; in default, to Lewis Bagot, Esq., son of Sir William Bagot, of Blithfield, with remainder to his first and other sons, in tail male; in default, to Heneage Legge, Esq., with like remainders; and in default,

to Wriothsley Digby, Esq., with like remainders; and, in default of issue to all these, with remainder to his own right heirs for ever. There was also a proviso to Mr. Charles Holte, to grant an annuity to his wife of £200, as an addition to the jointure already made by him; and, in the event of his surviving, and marrying a second time, power was given to grant such wife an annuity of £700. There was also a proviso empowering him to raise £10,000 for portions for his female or younger children.

But, though Sir Lister had been induced to make this unjust disposition, the affection of more than thirty years' duration between himself and his brother was not eradicated. Charles resided at Coleshill Hall, only ten miles from Aston, and occasionally also at Erdington Hall, belonging to the Family estate, only a mile distant; and so fond was Sir Lister of his brother's company, that he exacted of him, when at Erdington, to spend his evenings at Aston; and he was in the habit of entering the dining room when Lady Holte withdrew.

After his rejection by the electors of Lichfield, in 1747, Sir Lister does not appear to have taken a prominent part in public affairs, and he is only found to have occupied one official position—that of High Sheriff of Cheshire, in 1767. The indenture made by him, with John Wilson, gentleman, of Sandbach, the Under Sheriff, is still preserved at Atherstone. As years and infirmities increased,* Sir Lister (though not an old man) yielded himself more and more to the influence and management of his wife. Being advised by his physicians to visit Bath for his health, he there spent a considerable portion of his time. At this period, there is every reason to believe letters from his brother were withheld from him, and all kindly intercourse was gradually broken off. The two last letters from Sir Lister and his brother are of a very painful character, and show that the former was then entirely alienated from the earthly relative who loved him best, and coldly, and, indeed, reproachfully, refused him pecuniary assistance.† The following letters closed the communication for ever between the two branches of the Family. The first is from Miss Newton, the sister of Lady Holte, to Mrs. Holte: we copy from the original:—

"DEAR MADAM,—I have received your favour, which needed no apology, for was it in my power I should with great pleasure do you any service I could. I have communicated the contents of your letter to Sir Lister and Lady Holte: they bid me say, that as you so well know the reason of the shyness you complain of, they think all explanations unnecessary, and are determined not to make any alteration in the present situation of affairs. This subject is too disagreeable to dwell upon any longer, so will conclude myself,

"Madam, your most obedient servant,
"E. NEWTON.

"Bath, May ye 8th, 1769."

To this epistle Mrs. Holte sent the following emphatic reply. Our copy is from the original draft, in which one or two insertions and erasures by another hand, probably that of her husband, occur. The letter is undated:—

"DEAR MADAM,—Your obliging letter demands my most sincere thanks, both for the trouble you have been so good to take, and the desire you express to serve me if it was in your power. All that remains for me is to lament that I have, it seems, offended past forgiveness, and that an intercourse of even distant civilities cannot be restored. I must, in justice to myself, and duty to my husband and child, protest to you and all the world, was it necessary, as I mean to answer it to the Almighty at that day when every secret shall be discovered, that I do not know, *or even guess*, wherein I have offended Sir Lister and Lady Holte. That they may never experience the want of that justice they deny to me is the sincere wish of,

"Madam, your obliged and obedient servant,
"ANN HOLTE."

More than fourscore years have elapsed since these letters were written, and yet the melancholy interest attaching to them, as snapping the last link of the chain, only increases as time rolls on. The solemn asseveration of Mrs. Holte, and the final sentence of her affecting letter, are worthy of one whose high spirit bore her so bravely through her numerous trials.

* In his curious and unpublished work, entitled "Memorandums from Memory: all trifles, and of ancient date," Hutton gives the following:—"November 10, 1769.—Watched all night with John Ryland, Esq., he having broke his thigh the 7th. Dr. Parrott remarked 'that Sir Lister Holte was not the man he used to be.' I was on the point of asking, but durst not, if he was one of his body guards."

† This is the fact referred to by Hutton, in his reference to the entail.

On the 11th of October, 1769, the indenture of the 10th and 11th of May, 1758, was revoked, and the revocation is endorsed on the latter deed. On the day following the revocation, (12th October,) Sir Lister made his will. To his wife he left Aston Hall and manor for life, with an additional annuity of £800, his furniture, (except the books,) plate, jewels, &c., also for life, with remainder to his brother; all his ready money, the furniture of certain rooms, horses, farm stock, wine, &c., with £1,000 in money, to Lady Holte absolutely; the books and other personalty to Charles, his brother, after his debts, funeral expenses, and a year's wages to his servants, should have been paid. The real estate is then left to his brother for life, subject to payment of Lady Holte's annuity, and liquidation of any deficiency in the personal estate for payment of debts. In default of male issue to Sir Charles, the estate was to revert to Mr. Legge, and his heirs; in default, to Mr. Bagot; in default, to Mr. Digby; and in default, to the heirs general. There were also provisoes as to the annuity for Sir Charles's wife, and portions for his female or younger children, as in the indenture of 1758. The executors were Lady Sarah Holte, John Newton, Esq., her brother, and Fettiplace Nott, Esq. A codicil, leaving a few legacies, was added on the 6th of April, and Sir Lister died about eight o'clock in the evening of Sunday, the 8th of April, 1770, at Aston Hall. The will was proved on the 18th of May following, by all the executors, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. A small mural tablet to Sir Lister's memory bears the following inscription:—

To the memory of
Sir LISTER HOLTE, Baronet.
He married,
1st, Lady Anne Legge, youngest daughter of William, Earl of Dartmouth;
2nd, Mary, youngest daughter of Sir John Harpur, Bart., of Calke, in the county of Derby;
Lastly, Sarah, youngest daughter of Samuel Newton, Esq., of King's Bromley, in
the county of Stafford.
She died 1st April, MDCCLXIV., aged 70.
Sir Lister died without issue 8th April, MDCCLXX., aged 50.
His real estates, after the death of
Charles, his surviving brother,
he entailed successively on Heneage Legge, Esq., and Lewis Bagot, Bishop of St.
Asaph.
Nephews of his first wife,
and Wriotheley Digby, Esq., of Meriden, in this county,
on failure of whose respective issue he gave the same to his own right heirs for
ever.
This monument was erected MDCCLXIV.,
as a memorial of his virtues,
and in compliance with the wishes of his Widow,
by her affectionate sister,
Elizabeth Newton.

XXI.—Sir CHARLES HOLTE succeeded his brother. The history of the earlier portion of his life has been already given. The Family narrative is therefore taken up from the time of his succeeding to the title. The first circumstance of general interest in which Sir Charles took part was in 1774, when at the general election he was proposed as a candidate to represent the county of Warwick in the House of Commons. As the circumstances of the contest were rather peculiar, a more detailed account may be given than would otherwise be required. The object of the contest was the influence of Birmingham and the northern portion of the county over the southern, which had hitherto returned the two members; and it was considered that the great manufacturing district of the county ought to have a fair share in the representation. There was no objection to the return of Mr. Skipwith, one of the old members; but to the return of Mr., afterwards Sir John, Mordaunt, there was a decided dislike. This gentleman, who sought to supply his father's place, was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber; and this only increased the desire of the manufacturing interest to be represented by an unbiassed country gentleman, instead of a courtier. The popular cry, therefore, of "Holte and Independence," it will be at once apparent, was not an unmeaning one. The office, too, which Mr. Mordaunt unfortunately held, afforded scope for the artistic abilities of some of his opponents; but the caricatures, however much they might be relished at the time, were certainly not, as examples of the modest in art, to be commended. The nomination took place at Warwick, on the 13th of October, and the popular feeling in the county town was certainly, if the

statements of the Mordaunt party may be relied on, in favour of their candidate. The voting commenced on Thursday, the 20th, and at the close of the day, Mr. Mordaunt had polled 207 votes, and Sir Charles only 164.* On the following day, Mr. Mordaunt's success was yet more marked, the numbers being—Mordaunt, 788; Holte, 503. Nor did the Saturday improve Sir Charles's prospects, for his opponent still gained ground, Mordaunt having polled 1,256, and Holte 930. On the Monday, the numbers were—Mordaunt, 1,498; Holte, 1,187; on the day following, a strong effort was made to reduce the majority, and it was successful, Sir Charles having polled 128 votes more than his opponent on that day, the numbers being—Mordaunt, 1,570; Holte, 1,387. On the Wednesday the exertions of the preceding day were successfully renewed, and the majority was beaten down to 61—Mordaunt, 1,616; Holte, 1,555. Great was the interest with which the following day's polling was regarded. The chances of the final issue were calculated; the number of voters yet unpolled for the respective candidates anxiously examined; and all the circumstances affecting the contest fully taken into the account. Judging from the excitement that prevailed, the fate of a dynasty or an empire might have been at stake. But it was a county election, and what Englishman ever viewed such an event with indifference in his own locality? Those little printed missives, containing the "state of the poll," though dingy with the weight of nearly fourscore years, have still a power to stir the feeling of the people of Warwickshire, and have excited in our minds, as we have looked on them, an interest which graver matters of a much more recent date would have failed to inspire. On the Thursday—the seventh day of the contest—notwithstanding all efforts to the contrary, Sir Charles still gained on his opponent, the numbers being—Mordaunt, 1,678; Holte, 1,662; majority 16. Though the constituency was nearly polled out, neither party relaxed their exertions, but the star of Sir Charles was in the ascendant, and the Friday's polling showed—for Holte, 1,746; Mordaunt, 1,736; majority for Holte, 10. Invigorated by their success, the "Independence" supporters strained every nerve, and the Saturday's return gave—Holte, 1,818; Mordaunt, 1,764; majority, 54. Mr. Mordaunt, however, would not yet acknowledge his defeat, and continued the contest on the tenth day—Monday, the 31st,—but to no effect. The final close gave the numbers—Skipwith, 2,954; Holte, 1,845; Mordaunt, 1,787; majority for Sir Charles Holte, 58. After the declaration of the numbers, the two knights of the shire were chaired at Warwick, and Sir Charles made his public entry into Birmingham on Wednesday, the 2nd of November, "and notwithstanding," as the Mordaunt chronicler states, forgetting, in the enthusiasm of the moment, his duty to his party, "the amazing concourse of persons assembled on this joyful occasion, the public peace was preserved in such a manner as will reflect eternal honour on the inhabitants of Birmingham." Amid, says the same authority, "every mark of respect and attention which could be paid by a generous and free people to an independent representative," Sir Charles was conducted to the Swan Hotel, where "the entertainment provided for him by the freeholders was elegant and well-conducted;" and after this festival was concluded, he was escorted to his residence at Erdington, amid the loud and hearty congratulations of his zealous friends.†

On the 10th of September, 1775, the marriage articles of Sir Charles's only child, Mary Elizabeth, with Abraham Bracebridge, Esq., of Atherstone, were signed, and on the 12th of the same month, the marriage was solemnized at St. Michael's, Lichfield, Sir Charles then residing near to that city, at Freeford Hall, which he rented of R. Dyott, Esq., (Aston Hall and Park being occupied by the Dowager Lady Holte, under Sir Lister's will,) but he still kept up Erdington Hall, where he built the large room. Miss Holte's fortune was £20,000.

* Hutton, in the work before adverted to, under date October 20th, 1774, has the following:—"Rode with my son to Warwick, to vote, at my own expense, for Sir Charles Holte, as member for the county. The only time I ever did, or will, vote for a member of a self-interested Parliament, who only merit the disapprobation of the people."

† The feeling is shown by the numbers polled in the towns in the vicinity of Sir Charles's residence:—Aston:—Holte, 134; Mordaunt, 8; Birmingham:—Holte, 366; Mordaunt, 39; Sutton Coldfield:—Holte, 107; Mordaunt, 3; Tamworth:—Holte, 106; Mordaunt, 4. In the southern part of the county, however, the feeling was very strong in favour of Mordaunt.

The affairs of Sir Lister were not settled without a Chancery suit. By a decree, dated March 15th, 1775, "*Legge, Bagot, and Digby, v. Sir Charles Holte and wife, Dame Sarah Holte, John Newton, Fettiplace Nott, Elizabeth Newton, Mary Catherine Cartwright, Mary Elizabeth Bracebridge, (by her guardian,) and Alexander Jesson, (trustee for Lady Anne Holte,)*" the will of Sir Lister was declared well proved, and that the same ought to be established and the trusts performed; and it was referred to Mr. Leeds, one of the masters, to take an account of the testator's personal estate received by the defendants. It was also further declared that Sir Charles should be admitted a creditor for the two separate sums of £4,000 and £6,000. On the 22nd of March, 1779, a report was made by the master, stating the total debts of Sir Lister to be £14,192 19s. 0½d.; and the deficiency to be £13,805 17s. 7½d. The debts due to Sir Charles were recited as follows:—By indenture of settlement of May 26th, 1720, £4,000; bond from testator, dated April 19th, 1763, £6,000, and interest from April 1st, 1770; and for principal and interest, £2,153 5s. 1½d. After this the suit appears to have languished, but was revived in 1785, and continued in 1786, Mrs. Bracebridge recovering the amount due to her father, who had died in 1782.

The portrait of Sir Charles depicts him as a man of a calm and amiable character, not without a certain dignity, softened by the urbanity and gentleness of an old English country gentleman. Of Lady Holte, Romney painted a good picture, and an excellent likeness. She sits erect, with a somewhat severe expression of countenance, in which talent and determination are the leading characteristics. She retains the remains of what must have been beauty and liveliness in youth, mingled with the dignity of a lady who could well understand and ably defend her own rights. Romney has also left a fine picture of the daughter of Sir Charles and Lady Holte—Mrs. Bracebridge, with her daughter. She must have sat for this picture in about her twenty-seventh year. The style of beauty, both of form and complexion, is that of a high-bred Englishwoman, and the sweetness of expression is by no means disturbed by the sharp but delicate outline of the mouth, and an evident power of quick perception and lively feeling. The child is most admirably given, and the beautiful eyes and rounded features still bear a resemblance to the original, the lady of W. H. Bracebridge, Esq. The whole of these "household treasures" grace the collection of Mr. Bracebridge, at Atherstone.

Sir Charles made his will December 27th, 1779. In it he describes himself as of Erdington Hall, never having been in possession of the Family mansion. He bequeaths to his widow all his jewels, books, &c., for life; after her death, to his daughter; and afterwards to his grandchild or children; all the furniture of his house in London, and at Brereton and Erdington Halls, the wine, horses, coaches, farming stock, and pictures, and all that should come to him after the death of the dowager relict of Sir Lister, by the will of the latter, to his widow, Dame Ann; all the remaining property, personal and real, being directed to be sold, the interest arising from the proceeds to be paid to his widow, for life; at her decease, to Mrs. Bracebridge, for life; and after her decease, to Miss Mary Holte Bracebridge, her daughter, till she was twenty-one, or should marry, and then the principal was to be paid to her. "And I desire that my said son-in-law, Abraham Bracebridge, the younger, Esquire, and his issue by his present wife, the said Mary Elizabeth Bracebridge, my daughter, do and shall, as soon as conveniently may be, after my decease, by Act of Parliament or otherwise, take upon himself or themselves, and use the surname of Holte instead of Bracebridge." The executors were Abraham Bracebridge, and Richard Geast, of Blyth Hall, Warwickshire; but the will was proved by Mr. Bracebridge alone, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the 26th of March, 1782.

Sir Charles died at his residence, No. 6, Portman Square, London, on Tuesday, the 12th of March, 1782. His remains were conveyed from London, and on Sunday, the 24th, arrived at Castle Bromwich, and on the evening of the same day were interred at Aston, the funeral ceremony being witnessed by a vast concourse of people collected from all parts of the adjacent country.

A feeling of sadness comes over the mind at the thought of the death of Sir Charles under circumstances so widely different from those of his ancestors. Instead of breathing his last in the halls of his forefathers, he died away from all those scenes hallowed by a thousand tender recollections. Instead of being followed to the grave by a numerous circle of attached relatives, there were none to mourn his loss, or cherish his memory, save a widow and an only daughter; and he died with the sad consciousness that those who had no moral claim would succeed to that estate which had once been his. Truly, it was a fitting time, in the solemn gloom of a March midnight, to consign to his final resting place the last representative of a long ancestral line; and the solemnity of the hour and the scene, doubtlessly, spoke to many a heart of the evanescence of things earthly; while, it may also be hoped, the approaching season of spring would remind many a spectator of the time when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and the bodies of the righteous be raised to flourish in eternal bloom.

On the death of Sir Charles the Family title became extinct. His widow survived him, and by her was erected a mural monument to his memory, near that of his ancestor, Edward, who died in 1592. The following is the inscription:—

Sacred
to the memory of
Sir CHARLES HOLTE, Bart.,
who, after a decline of three years,
which he bore with the greatest patience and resignation,
departed this life the 12th of March, 1782,
Aged 60 years.
Sir Charles was the second son of Sir Cleobury Holte, Bart.
He married, in 1755, Ann, the daughter of Pudsey Jesson, Esq., and left only one child,
Mary Elizabeth, the heiress of this Family, married, in 1775, to
Abraham Bracebridge, of Atherstone, Esq. By the will of her uncle,
Sir Lister Holte, Bart., the large estates in this county, and other valuable
possessions, were alienated, and his niece, then an infant, deprived of the
patrimony of her ancestors.
This monument marks the hallowed spot where the remains of a beloved
and revered friend are deposited; but it cannot represent the unutterable grief
occasioned by his death, or convey an adequate idea of her gratitude, who
twenty-seven years experienced all the happiness
that the most indulgent and affectionate
husband could bestow.

This high-spirited lady died on the 14th of March, 1799, aged sixty-five, and was buried by the side of her husband. By her will, dated the 3rd of November, 1796, and proved the 5th of July, 1799, she left all her property to her daughter, Mrs. Bracebridge, with remainder to her grand-daughter. No mention is made of her grandson, the present Mr. Bracebridge, as that gentleman was not born till the 19th of March, 1799—five days after her decease. On the floor of the aisle of the church is a slab bearing the following inscription:—

In a vault
beneath this marble rest
the remains of
Sir CHARLES HOLTE, Bart.,
and DAME ANN, his wife.
On the adjacent wall of this Church
she caused a monument to be erected
to perpetuate the memory of
the best of husbands.
She died on the 14th of March, 1799,
Aged 65, having survived her irreparable loss
seventeen years.

The acute and accomplished Richard Lovell Edgeworth, in his interesting memoirs of himself, (vol. 1, p. 380,) describes Lady Holte as “a woman of much knowledge of the world, and of great firmness of character.” He married, for his third wife, Miss Elizabeth Sneyd, who was intimate with Lady Holte.

Mrs. Bracebridge had two children—Mary Holte, born June 22nd, 1776, who married, at Mancetter, (the parish church of Atherstone,) on December 8th, 1803, her first cousin, Walter

Henry Bracebridge, Esq., of Morville House, in the county of Warwick, (both being now alive;) and Charles Holte, born March 19th, 1799. Mrs. Bracebridge was buried at Mancetter, a tablet to her memory bearing the following inscription:—

In memory of
 MARY ELIZABETH,
 Wife of Abraham Bracebridge, Esq., of Atherstone Hall,
 in this parish.
 She was the daughter of Sir Charles Holte, Bart., of Aston, and
 Dame Anne, (Pudsey Jesson,) of Langley, in this county.
 She died on the 24th of April, 1819, aged 62.
 With an understanding highly cultivated,
 and pretensions of every kind to higher rank in life,
 she preferred the social comforts of a private home,
 which she adorned by every Christian virtue.
 She enjoyed the gifts of Providence with thankfulness and humility,
 was patient under suffering, and kissed the rod of affliction.
 Her strong and dignified mind
 was contrasted by the amiable qualities of the heart.
 She was affectionate to her family,
 kind to her friends, and good to all.

The present Mr. Bracebridge married, in March, 1824, Selina, daughter of William Mills, Esq., of Bisterne, Hants. He is an active magistrate for the counties of Warwick and Leicester, and Deputy-Lieutenant for the former county; and a warm friend of literature, art, and science. His tastes are indicated by the fact of his having for some time had a residence in the vicinity of the world-renowned Athens. Some of the sketches made by his lady, of ruined Grecian temples and objects of antiquarian interest, exhibited at the expositions for the benefit of local societies, are of a high order of merit. She also adorned, with texts of Scripture, the walls of the chapel of the English embassy at Athens. To Mr. Bracebridge we have been deeply indebted for a very large portion of the matter contained in many of these pages. With a kindness, courtesy, and patience that could not have been exceeded, he has done all in his power to elucidate every obscure or doubtful point; and by the confidence he has generously reposed, in the loan of documents and pedigrees of the most important and valuable character, as well as other papers, he has conferred literary obligations beyond our power to discharge.

Mr. Bracebridge's father, Abraham Bracebridge, Esq., was the elder son (and soon after his marriage the successor) of Abraham Bracebridge, Esq., of Atherstone Hall, Warwickshire, where, as well as at Brereton Hall, Cheshire, he subsequently generally resided. In the first year of this century he raised a volunteer corps at Atherstone, and in 1808 served the office of High Sheriff for the county. He died at Atherstone, August 21st, 1832. The Bracebridge Family was founded in this county by Peter de Bracebrigg, Lord of Bracebrigg, on the River Witham, in Lincolnshire, who, about 1100, married Amicia, daughter of Osbert de Arden, and grand-daughter of Turchill de Arden, Earl of Warwick in the time of the Confessor. Turchill was a man of great importance, as Dugdale shows, and descended in a right line from Reynburn, son of Guy, Earl of Warwick, by his wife, Leonetta, daughter of King Ethelstan, and great grand-daughter of King Alfred. With Amicia, Peter de Bracebrigg inherited Kingsbury, an ancient residence of the Kings of Mercia, which had descended to Turchill, and here the Bracebridges held their principal residence till the 6th of Elizabeth, when the manor was sold to the Caves and Willoughbys, a rent charge of £42 being reserved, which is still paid.

After this period the Bracebridge Family was divided into two branches, the elder of which soon became extinct. The second again formed two branches: the elder settled at Lindley, in Leicestershire, and rebuilt the manor house; and the younger purchased the Atherstone estate and hall, late a friary. Both these transactions took place at the end of the seventeenth century, but as the last of the Lindley line died in 1786, devising his estate to two nieces, who married into the families of Abney and Heming, the Atherstone branch is the only one remaining of the Family. Mr. Bracebridge had a son and daughter; the latter married Walter Henry, the son of his brother

Walter; the former is the present owner of Atherstone. The only other member of the Family now alive is Harriet Anne, Mrs. Ogle, sister of Mr. Walter Henry Bracebridge. The Family arms are—Vaire, argent and sable, a fesse gules. Crest—a staff ragulé, argent. Motto—"Be as God will."

Sir Robert Holte, as will be seen by reference to a former page, had four sons by his second wife, all of whom, according to Collins, died without issue. There are parties, however, who claim descent from Edward, the younger son, and to them we now advert.

The most diligent search has failed to discover any record relative to the births of any of Sir Robert's children. From his grandfather's will he appears to have been married to his second wife as early as 1650, so that some of his children would be born during the time of the Commonwealth. No record, however, appears at Aston of any of them having been there baptized; and after the Restoration, being a member of Parliament, he would probably reside chiefly in London; but all investigations among the metropolitan registers have been fruitless. Neither has the most unwearied search sufficed to show that Sir Robert made any will. He was buried on the 3rd of October, 1679, little more than three months after the death of his wife, so that it is probable, from the shortness of the interval, he died intestate. We mention these circumstances to show the difficulties attending the case. Collins's statement—positive as it appears—is by no means to be relied on: he gave it as he received it from Sir Charles; but as the latter would consider his brother a disgrace to the Family, he would pass him over in the briefest manner.

This (supposed) Edward—probably from his acquaintance with William Hemings, of Worcester, a member of the Society of Friends, (who married Elizabeth, the elder daughter of Sir Robert)—embraced the opinions held by that body. In the month of January, 1692—the same year as his sister's marriage—he wedded, at the Friends' Meeting, at Dudley, Mary Hornblower, of Hales Owen. His place of residence was at Brierley Hill, where he carried on business as a coal and iron master. From the Court Rolls of the Manor of Cradley, it appears that at a Court Baron held the 21st of October, 1685, (the year after he was stated by Collins as alive,)* John Wheeler and Elenore his wife surrendered certain houses and lands at Cradley, containing in all sixteen acres, to the use of Edward Holt and his heirs for ever; a life interest in one of the houses being reserved to one Elizabeth Cole. The fine paid amounted to £12. He was buried at the Friends' Meeting House, at Stourbridge, in 1714, being about fifty years of age, leaving two children—Mary, born October 9th, 1693, married to James Compson; and Edward, born 1695. The name of the daughter is inserted in the Friends' books, at Stourbridge, but not that of the son. From the Court Rolls of the Manor of Bewdley, however, it appears that, in 1718, Edward Holt, with Mary Holt, widow, his mother, mortgaged the whole of the property to Joseph Palmer, of Hagley, gent.; and in the same rolls for 1721, the payment of the mortgage by, and re-surrender of the property to, this Edward, are recorded. He lived at Cradley Manor House, which formed part of the purchase by his father in 1685; and married Elizabeth Cox, of the Lye Waste, on the 6th of September, 1720. Bred up in the tenets of the Friends, he resolutely adhered to them through life, and firmly withstood the offers of Sir Lister (with whom he was on visiting terms) to conform to the Church of England. He never had any of his children baptized, notwithstanding Sir Lister's strong solicitations, who, in a frolic, obtained possession for a short time of one of the younger daughters, whom he caused to be baptized by the name of Sobieski! In 1746, it appears by the Bewdley Court Rolls, he surrendered the property to the uses specified in his will; and dying in 1767, was buried at the Friends' Meeting House, in Stourbridge. His wife survived him, and in the year last mentioned she was admitted tenant of the property, according to the will of her late husband, the fine paid being £18. The property was ultimately disposed of in 1776. This gentleman had a family of three sons—Joseph, Edward, and John; and six daughters—Anne, Sarah, Mary, Elizabeth, Sobieski,

* The point to be established, of course, is, as to the identity of the Edward Holte, son of Sir Robert, with Edward Holt, of Brierley Hill. This has not yet been proved.

and Jane. Of the sons, Joseph had a son and daughter, who both died young. John, the younger son, had a numerous issue. Edward, the second son, born in 1738, lived in Birmingham, and was engaged with his brother in the spade manufacture at Cradley Forge. He was well acquainted with the late Mr. Hutton; and it was through misinterpreting the information procured from him, that the historian fell into the strange mistake of supposing that the head of the Family was originally a blacksmith. Mr. Holt died in 1800, leaving four sons—John, Edward, Benjamin, and Cornelius; and six daughters. John dying without issue, Edward became the representative of the Family; he was born in 1771, and died in 1831, leaving one son, Edward, born in 1806, (an extensive wire drawer and pin manufacturer in Birmingham,) and two daughters, Mary and Sarah; the former now living.

It may not be out of place here to refer to the circumstance that the parties whose history has just been briefly given, acting upon the idea that the entail had never been legally cut off, but supposing (like Hutton and others) that no fine had ever been levied, and that the disposition of the estate was entirely dependent on Sir Lister's will, made great exertions, by examinations of registers and wills, and other means, to obtain the necessary evidence in support of their claim; and it was not till 1849 that they became aware of the deed of the 30th of June, 1742, an abstract of the contents of which has already been given. Immediately on obtaining this information, Mr. Holt submitted the case to the opinion of counsel, by whom the following reply was returned:—

"Sir Lister Holte being in possession of the fee, and of full age, I am inclined to think he was legally entitled to sue a fine for the purpose of a recovery, and the consent of his brother Charles, at the time a minor, was not legally necessary.

"Provided the entail has been legally cut off, Sir Lister Holte could leave the property to whom he pleased, which he appears to have done; and the failure of the male heirs to whom the devise was made according to his will, entitled the right heirs of Sir Lister to the property; and as the male heirs are not named, but heirs general, Mrs. Bracebridge, being the next and nearest in blood, I believe would come in."

This opinion, so clearly stating the case, of course decided the matter; and whatever claim Mr. Holt may have to the Baronetcy, it is quite certain that the property was lawfully alienated. We may remark that Mr. Holt has in his possession three hatchments, on panel, that have descended from the first Edward; but they are not the arms of any family registered in the Heralds' College; neither are they good heraldry, the blazonry being in some particulars incorrect.

Numerous persons in the neighbourhood of Brierley Hill and Cradley claim affinity to the Family, and one person at Tipton has acquired some notoriety by his proceedings. There are also other parties at Abbots Bromley, and in Derbyshire, who declare themselves to be the "right heirs," and a gentleman in the county of Middlesex also asserts his right to the title;—but in no case have we been furnished with any information which tends to prove the relationship.

On the death of Sir Charles Holte, in 1782, the estates, according to the settlement in Sir Lister's will, reverted to Mr. Heneage Legge, but that gentleman had no issue, and the same remark applies to Mr. Digby, the third party nominated in the will. The Bishop of St. Asaph, who was placed second, died, without issue, in 1802. Mrs. Bracebridge was consequently heir at law. On the security of this reversion her husband raised large sums of money, which, in consequence of his bad success in the working of a patent for the manufacture of soap, and from other causes, he was unable to discharge, and he had, in consequence, become so seriously embarrassed, that after various agreements from time to time, an indenture was entered into between Heneage Legge, Wriothesley Digby, Abraham and Mary Elizabeth Bracebridge, and others, in which "after taking notice of the said will of the said Sir Lister Holte, and that neither of them the said Heneage Legge and Wriothesley Digby had, and that it was not probable that either of them would have any issue,"* it was recited that

"Unless some arrangement could be made with the tenants for life of the said estates, it would be absolutely necessary to sell the said reversion, in order to satisfy, so far as the purchase money for the same would extend, the several

* Mr. Legge was about seventy, and Mr. Digby seventy-two years of age.

debts charged upon the said reversion; and also reciting that under the circumstances aforesaid it had been agreed between the said tenants for life of the said estates and the several persons interested in the said reversion in fee, that the said estates should (subject and without prejudice to, and without in any manner affecting the estates in tail male to the sons of the said tenants for life) be apportioned between them in fee simple in possession in the manner after mentioned."

An Act of Parliament being necessary to confirm this indenture, a petition was presented on the 3rd of March, to the House of Lords, for a bill; which petition was ordered to be referred to Mr. Baron Wood and Mr. Justice Park. On the 10th of June, a second petition was presented, setting forth that the Judges having been on circuit, and the witnesses to prove the allegations being numerous, and many of them residing in places very distant from London, the petitioners had been unable to proceed before them till after the time allowed by the House for bringing in reports upon petitions had expired; that the Judges had gone through the bill, and signed the report; and praying their Lordships that, in consideration of the circumstances stated, the report might be received. This having been agreed to, leave was given to bring in the bill, which was passed on the 3rd of July, and sent to the Commons. On the 7th, having gone through all its stages in the Lower House, it was returned to the Lords, and received the assent of the Prince Regent on the 10th.* By this indenture, which was dated May 6th, 1817, it was "witnessed, agreed, and declared" that Mr. Bracebridge's interest as lessee in the Brereton estate should merge in the inheritance; that the fee simple of the hereditaments in schedule A should be vested in trustees therein named for sale, to pay all the costs or sums after mentioned; that the fee simple in schedule B should be vested in Mr. Legge and his heirs, free from all incumbrances, except fee-farm and quit-rents, &c.; that the fee simple in schedule C should, subject to certain mortgages, and the charge for the support of the Aston alms-houses, and to fee-farm and quit-rents, &c., be vested in Mr. Digby; that schedules D and F should be vested in trustees, for sale; that schedule E should be vested in Sir William Paxton, Sir Charles Cockerell, and Charles Greenwood, Esq.; that schedule G should be vested in W. W. Currey, Esq., as assignee of Walter Henry Bracebridge, Esq.; that schedule H should be vested in Messrs. Currey and Digby, for sale, in trust for Mrs. Bracebridge; and after various other recitals, it was agreed that Mr. Legge "should hold the said mansion house and park of Aston, and the lands then held by him therewith, until the 10th day of October then next, at the rent of £500," he defraying all the taxes and other outgoings in respect of the same. The preamble of the Act of Parliament confirming the indenture concludes with divers other recitals not requiring special notice, after which it was enacted:—

- 1.—That the indenture of May 6th, 1817, be confirmed.
- 2.—That the manors, &c., in the schedules, be vested in trustees, who should convey them to the persons, and in the divisions expressed in the indenture.
- 3.—To facilitate execution of the trusts, the trustees to have power to call meetings of the creditors.
- 4.—No commission of bankruptcy to disqualify a trustee.
- 5.—On death or removal from the kingdom of a trustee, the High Court of Chancery, on petition, to appoint a new trustee.
- 6.—Act not to affect Richard Thornton, who was in Holland at the time of its passing, till he should give his consent by writing thereto; such writing to be enrolled in the High Court of Chancery within twelve calendar months after the passing of the Act.†
- 7.—Saving clause.
- 8.—Act to be printed by the King's printers; a printed copy to be admitted as evidence by all judges, justices, and others.

The following are the contents of the schedules referred to in the Act:—

- A.—The Aston property, containing 1,207A. 2B. 35P., the rents at 25th March, 1817, being £3,109 1s.; and the Cheshire property, 1,279A. 0B. 3P., rents, £1,314 6s. 4d.
- B.—The manors of Duddleston and Nechells, advowson of Aston, freehold of hamlet of Ashted, Duddleston Hall, and lands and houses let on lease for various terms; amounting, in the whole, to 768A. 3B. 20P., rents, £4,452 1s. 8d.
- C.—Manor of Erdington Hall, one-fourth of manor of Bordesley, Hay Mill Brook House, and other lands in Aston parish; manor house, mills, pools, and lands in Sutton Coldfield: total contents, 1,100A. 0B. 31P., rents, £1,898 9s. 4d.

* Journals of House of Lords, Vol. LI., p. 72, 277, 280, 347, 360, 376, 399. Journals of House of Commons, Vol. LXXII., p. 446, 459, 460.

† By deed poll of July 23rd, 1817, Mr. Thornton consented to the Act, and on the 26th of the same month such consent was enrolled in Chancery.

- D.—Manor and hall of Brereton, containing 1,128A. 1R. 8P., let on lease to Mr. Bracebridge: total contents, 2,800A. 0R. 35P., rents, £2,591 15s. (At foot of this schedule is mentioned the sum of £1,493 17s. in the Three per Cent. Annuities, surplus arising from sale of hereditaments by Mr. Legge, on redeeming land tax on estates of Sir Lister Holte.)*
- E.—Manors of Lapworth and Bushwood, and houses, farms, &c., in the parishes of Lapworth, Old Stratford-on-Avon, Rowington, Preston Bagot, and Beadesert, in the county of Warwick: contents, 1,014A. 1R. 28P.; rents, £1,042 12s.; and Lapworth chief rents, £3 7s. 9d.
- F.—Manor, hall, and advowson of Aston, (not valued, having been partially mentioned in schedules A and B.) lands, &c., and advowson of Brereton: contents, 320A. 2R. 12P., rents, £1,258 7s. 6d.; tithes in Erdington on 2,628A. 1R. 31P., amounting to £303 0s. 8d.; in Witton, on 158A. 3R. 23P., amounting to £19 4s. 6d.; and in Bordesley, on 1,165A. 2R. 25P., amounting to £57 15s. 6d. Total income in this schedule, £1,638 8s. 2d.
- G.—Lands at Erdington and Saltley, containing 185A. 2R. 13P., rents, £257 7s. 6d.
- H.—Lands at Witton, containing 243A. 0R. 6P., rents, £249 12s.

The total acreage of the property, as appearing in the above schedules, is 8,914A. 2R. 23P., and the rentals, £16,557 0s. 9d. Large though the annual income was at the time of the compilation of the schedules, the property in the neighbourhood of Birmingham has enormously increased in value since that period. The leases of building land in schedule B are generally for ninety-nine years, the dates commencing in 1788, and extending to 1815. Brereton Hall, also, leased to Mr. Bracebridge at £700 a year, must have been worth considerably more than that sum. The Aston property originally extended from the junction of Birmingham parish, at the termination of Prospect Row, to beyond Erdington Hall, and from Neehells and Saltley to the Custard House and Hay Mill Brook. To any one acquainted with the localities here mentioned, the immense extent of the possessions will be at once apparent. The total value of the whole estates was estimated in 1816, by a somewhat hasty survey, at £600,000.

After the passing of the Act, Mr. Legge quitted the Hall for his beautiful villa at Putney, where he died in January, 1827, and the furniture was offered for sale by auction. Before this, however, numerous articles of interest were removed to Atherstone Hall, and little remained to excite the attention of the curious. The pictures of the Duke of Rutland, Sir Clobery Holte, Sir Lister and Charles Holte, when children, King Charles the First and his Family, Lord Crewe, Lady Harpur, Sir John Harpur, Bishop King, and others, as well as David and Goliath, having been left at Aston, were, through the neglect of an order for packing them, dispersed at the sale. Mr. Hamper purchased the David and Goliath, and Mrs. Armishaw, of Aston, has possession of the portraits of Sir Lister and his brother. The portrait of the first Lord Brereton, with an ancient picture of Brereton Hall; the fifth Lord Brereton; King Charles and his Queen; Queen Anne; Queen Elizabeth; a delicate and curious Holbein of Edward the Sixth; a duplicate of the Earl of Stafford and his secretary, Sir R. Willoughby; a duplicate portrait of Sir Thomas Holte; and a few others, (two of which are supposed to be Breretons,) in addition to those mentioned in a previous page, are now in Mr. Bracebridge's possession. The picture of Dr. Hough, the famous President of Magdalen College, and Bishop of Worcester, is lost; and that of Dr. King, Bishop of London, was transferred (by Mr. Legge, with leave) to the collection of the Bishop of London, at Fulham. Portraits of Sir Robert, of his son, Sir Charles, and of Lady Clobery, are in the possession of Mr. W. H. Bracebridge; those of Sir Lister and Lady Sarah are at Mr. Lane's, of King's Bromley Manor; and a head of Lady Anne, the first wife of Sir Lister, is at Sandwell Hall, the property of the Earl of Dartmouth. Three half-lengths of young ladies, probably daughters of Sir Charles, are in possession of Mr. Roderick, of New Street; and one, also a female, in that of Mr. Jones, likewise of New Street. The portrait of Sir Thomas Holte, a large full length, was presented by Mr. Legge to Mr. Josiah Robins, who conducted the sale, and is now in possession of his widow, at Allesley Hall, near Coventry, whose courtesy in permitting it to be copied for the use of this work we have pleasure in acknowledging. Mrs. Robins also possesses a small half-length of the "good Lady Brereton;" a three-quarter of Lady Caroline Jones; a three-quarter of a lady, attributed to Lely; a three-quarter, supposed to have been intended for Looke or Milton; a group of flowers and fruit; and also a game piece.

* The amount of tax redeemed was £247 9s. 6d., the price paid £9,074 1s. 8d. in the Three per Cent. Consols, or Reduced Bank Annuities; payment to be made in sixteen instalments. The deed is dated April 24th, 1799.

The same lady also has in her possession a walnut cabinet, with brass locks, and mountings enclosing a crown. This is called, whether truly or otherwise, "King Charles's cabinet." The portrait of the Countess of Derby is in the possession of W. C. Alston, Esq., of Elmdon Hall. Of those portraits left at the Hall, no clue can be gained from the catalogue of the sale. The total number valued to Mr. Legge in 1794, was 119, and of other pictures, 37; the amount being estimated at £56. Among others, the following items occur:—Forty-five portraits, £9; miniature of Edward VI., by Holbein, £1 1s.; sixteen very old portraits, &c., 2s. 6d.; picture of Aston Hall, and two portraits, 6s.; King Charles and Family, three whole, three three-quarter length, and twelve half-length portraits, £21 1s. 6d. Four of the six chairs left by Charles I. in 1642, were also dispersed, without any sign to mark their rarity, save the royal arms carved on the back. One of them is now in the possession of the Rev. Egerton Bagot, of Pye Hayes.

The auction, which was conducted by Messrs. Josiah and Cornelius Robins, commenced on Monday, September 22nd, 1817, and lasted nine days, exclusive of the sale of the farming stock and a supplementary sale of goods not removed. The number of lots was 1,144. No person of eminence attended the sale, and the prices realised were, in many instances, especially with reference to the pictures and prints, disproportionately small. The furniture realised £2,150, and the farming stock £1,201; total, £3,351. The decadence of Aston had set in in full tide.

On the 15th of April, 1818, and two following days, after several postponements, the Hall and estate were offered for sale, the land amounting to 1,530 acres, and the property was divided into lots "suitable to the situations." The Hall was purchased by Messrs. Greenway, Greaves, and Whitehead, bankers, of Warwick, and is now in possession of the two former and Mr. Lowe, the late Mr. Whitehead's representative.* On the 5th of October following, the Hall, and park of upwards of 300 acres of land, with the stock of 200 head of deer, were offered "to be let on lease or to yearly tenants, together or in four or five lots;" and on the 19th of the same month, the north wing was advertised to be let, being described as "consisting of two parlours to the terrace on the ground floor, a very desirable drawing room, and four bed rooms on the chamber floor," beside other rooms; and farm buildings, and land from 30 to 150 acres, "if required." The Hall was ultimately let to James Watt, Esq., son of the celebrated James Watt, on a lease for a term of years. The destruction of the old associations was completed by the sale of the herd of deer, then diminished to 150, advertised on the 21st of December. The line of the Liverpool branch of the London and North Western Railway crosses the magnificent avenue between the lane and the turnpike road, and in the year 1852 a street was laid out between the lane and the Hall, thus again intersecting the avenue.

With the sale faded the last vestige of the glory of Aston. The mansion was then closed to the public, and henceforth its historic associations, its distinctive architecture, and its lovely scenery were shrouded from the eye. During Mr. Watt's occupation of the Hall, no strangers were allowed to inspect the interior; and whatever might have been the motive which induced this course, it was strictly adhered to.

* That portion of the park which is in Staffordshire was not sold at this time. It had formed part of the property bequeathed by Lady Anne Holte to her grandson Charles, and was rented by Mr. Legge during his occupancy of the Hall, at £200 per year. Mrs. Bracebridge disposed of it at a subsequent period.





11. 12. 13. 14. 15.

WARWICKSHIRE.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15.

16. 17. 18. 19. 20.

DESCRIPTION OF ASTON HALL.

ASTON HALL is situated on a gently rising eminence, at the extremity of a noble avenue of elms and Spanish chestnuts, and is built in the form usual with edifices of the period—a centre and two wings, emblematic, it is supposed, of the initial letter of Queen Elizabeth. The view from the Church Lane is exceedingly striking, and still more so from the Lichfield Turnpike Road, on account of the increased length of the avenue, which carries the line of vision directly forward, so that the general plan of the whole building is at once apparent.

On each side, as an advanced guard, is a small square building, connected with the wings by a wall having an ornamental coping. The chief features of the wings are the two large embayed windows to the front, with their pierced parapets, and the lofty towers, surmounted by closed ogee roofs of a dome-like character. These towers advance considerably into the quadrangle, of which the whole forms three sides, and have their two lower stories divided by horizontal string-courses very boldly moulded, and projecting considerably from the surface of the wall. These string-courses, or mouldings, are carried round the greater portion of the building, and, indeed, form an important feature. Each of the towers has an entrance on the ground floor, consisting of a square-panelled door, under a semicircular arch enriched with a large shell ornament, and flanked by flat shallow fluted pilasters having plain capitals, and high square bases ornamented with sunk panelling. The moulding of the lower string-course slightly projects over these pilasters, and, indeed, appears as if it were a continuation of them, serving to support the bracket-shaped bases of two enriched graduated pilasters, narrowing to the base. These flank the window of the first floor, and are continued up to the second string-courses, of which they also form a portion, and are important features, adding considerably to the beauty of the towers. The ornamental curved gables of these wings, combined with the various groups of octagonal chimneys, give a picturesque and pleasing appearance to the whole.

Of the centre buildings and principal entrance the characteristic features are the large windows lighting the Entrance Hall, and those of the Great and Oak Staircases, and a massive central tower of three stories, capped with a double ogee roof; on each side of the tower are two curved gables, in which are placed small windows. The central portion of this front—containing the principal entrance, the four windows of the Hall,—two on either side of the door, and those of three chambers over them, and surmounted by a bold cornice and balustrade—slightly projects from the main portion of the building, and serves to relieve what would otherwise appear of a formal character. The projecting porch—one of the distinctive features of the Elizabethan style—is omitted; but although the decoration is carried out with the spirit that characterises the whole of the details throughout the building, yet the absence of that contrast of light and shade which a bold porch would have afforded is sensibly felt. The doorway consists of a semicircular arch with two fluted columns on square bases, supporting an entablature, above which is an ornamental panel flanked by two scroll

ornaments, and surmounted by a shield on which are emblazoned quarterly the arms of Holte, Castells, Maidenach with Grimsarwe, and Willington. The panel bears the following inscription:—

SE THOMAS HOLTE, OF DYDDESTON, IN THE COVNTIE OF WARWICK, KNIGHT
AND BARONET BEGAN TO BYILD THIS HOVSE IN APRILL IN ANNO DOMINI
1618: IN THE 16TH YEARE OF THE RAIGNE OF KING JAMES OF ENGLAND, &c.,
AND OF SCOTLAND THE ONE AND FIFTIETH, AND THE SAID SE THOMAS HOLTE
CAME TO DWELL IN THIS HOVSE IN MAY IN ANNO DOMINI: 1631: IN THE
SEAVENTH YEARE OF THE RAIGNE OF OVR SOVERAIGNE LORD KING
CHARLES, AND HE DID FINISH THIS HOVSE IN APRILL ANNO DOMINI 1635:
IN THE ELEVENTH YEARE OF THE RAIGNE OF THE SAID KING CHARLES.
LAVS DEO.

Connected with each wing by a wall is a small square building (before mentioned) of two stories, originally appropriated as residences for the falconer or gamekeeper, and gardener. These buildings have windows similar to those in the wings, but not so large or bold. A door in the south connecting wall leads into the garden; a gateway in the north one opens into the courtyard appropriated to the domestic offices.*

The garden presents a scene of unsurpassed loveliness. Immediately in the foreground a carpet of the softest turf, adorned at intervals with treasures of the floral world, delights the eye of the admiring beholder; while venerable Portugal laurels, rhododendrons, and other shrubs, disposed in pleasing forms, add the contrast of their more sober foliage to the gayer tints of the scene; a noble line of solemn yews forming an appropriate background to the whole. Nor are the charms of contrast wanting. Turning an angle, the sweeping branches of some noble walnut trees diffuse a feeling of sober pensiveness, while, at the same time, they protect the garden from easterly winds. From the walk that winds beneath the boughs of one of these trees, our south-east view of the Hall is obtained. Flanking the east side of, but extending considerably beyond, the garden, is an avenue of sycamore trees, rather more than 300 yards in length; and the boughs of the trees so completely interlace, and resemble the groined roof of the nave of a Gothic cathedral, as to afford no inconsiderable degree of support to Warburton's opinion as to the origin of pointed architecture.

If the east front of Aston Hall may be designated as grand, the southern view may, with equal propriety, be termed beautiful. The more prominent feature is the projection in the centre, containing the windows in the Chapel, and the large ones in the Great Drawing Room. On each side, on the ground floor, is a colonnade of four arches, having plain circular pillars, with capitals and bases. These pillars support semicircular arches with dripstones, and ornamented on the faces and reveals with sunk panels. Adjoining the Great Drawing Room, and over the east colonnade, are the King's Bed Room and Dressing Room, the latter having been partitioned off from another room, the remaining portion also serving as a dressing room to the first floor room as seen from the east front. These two dressing rooms, and that part of the colonnade over which they are placed, did not form a portion of the original building, as the bracket of an oriel window may be seen, partially hidden by the roof of the colonnade; and the places where the junctions have been effected are distinctly visible on the exterior of the building, and shown also in the illustration.

Adjoining the Great Drawing Room, to the west, is Lady Holte's Drawing Room, adjacent to which is the vestibule to the Long Gallery: these rooms are over the second colonnade. The vestibule is also an addition. The wall of Lady Holte's Drawing Room still bears distinct traces of the attack in 1643, the only spot where the besiegers could have erected their battery being a small eminence about 240 yards from the Hall, and exactly opposite this room. Many of the balls, after penetrating the outer wall, passed through that on the opposite side of the room, to the

* The view of the Hall introduced in the background of the picture of Sir Thomas Holte has the space between the wings represented as laid out as a pleasure, separated from the adjoining park by a low clipped hedge, with demi-figures on pedestals at equal distances; from the centre of this extends a paved walk to the entrance door, and on either side are three rows of pyramidally clipped yew trees, with statuary, on pedestals, between. In front of this pleasure, and at a little distance, are some ornamental palisades, with rather elaborately worked gates. Whether this design was ever carried into effect, and subsequently removed, or merely introduced in the picture as a suggestion to be afterwards acted upon, cannot now be determined.





staircase, one of them shattering a massive oak standard, and finding a resting place in the adjoining wall; another piercing one of the beautiful panelled compartments; while a third, pointed higher than the rest, passed over the balustrade, making a circular hole (which still remains) through the door opening on to the sixth landing.

In the west colonnade is a very massive door, boldly panelled, which opens to the Terrace adjoining the west front of the Hall. This front has, in the centre, a small glazed porch, forming an entrance from the Saloon, and four windows on each side, lighting the suite of rooms under the Long Gallery. The whole of this lower portion of the building is mantled with ivy. Above these rooms—five in number—is the Long Gallery, which is lighted by five windows, the central one and a portion of the adjoining wall slightly projecting, and having niches—one on either side—containing statues of David and Solomon. Above these windows is a bold cornice, surmounted by a parapet, on which, at equal distances, are placed vases. The roof of the Gallery is flat, and leaded, forming a delightful promenade. At the back of the roof, and in the centre of the main building, is a large stack of octagonal chimneys, on each side of which are three gables, having small windows, which light the dormitories formed within the gables, and opening into a passage in the interior, termed "Dick's Garret." This front has evidently been designed with an especial reference to the Long Gallery—the favourite and usual appendage to Elizabethan mansions of the larger kind.

The Terrace, which consists of a broad gravelled walk, nearly 500 feet in length, embraces, in its extent, the whole of the west front, the garden on the south side, and the courtyard on the north appropriated for domestic offices. It is divided from the garden and courtyard by lofty walls, covered with choice fruit trees. Between this walk and the park, from which it is divided by a sunken wall, is a level lawn of turf, the centre of which is carried forward as an oval. This lawn is ornamented with flowering shrubs, and has, opposite the saloon entrance to the house, a small sun-dial. In the park, and at a little distance from the south end of the Terrace, is a magnificent lime tree, which, from the luxuriance of its growth, and the elegance of its shape, is worthy of especial attention.

At the north-east corner of the Terrace a flight of steps conducts to the north side of the house, beyond which are the stabling and out-offices. The centre portion of this side of the building projects slightly beyond the Long Gallery, the bay window of which, at its north end, is worthy of notice, and contains, on the ground floor, the Servants' Hall, Kitchen, and Housekeeper's Room; and on the first floor, the Blue Room, Chinese Room, Lady Holte's Bed Room, and the Boudoir, called after the same lady. Several gables, containing domestics' sleeping apartments, terminate this side of the building.

Many of the windows in this front have been despoiled of their mullions, and further injured by the introduction of modern window frames. This was evidently the work of unskilful hands towards the close of the last century, at a time when architectural taste was at its lowest ebb. The same tasteless age also witnessed the painting of the beautiful oak panelling, and other equally barbarous alterations in many of the rooms in the interior. It may also be mentioned that the whole of the chimneys are octagonal, with plain moulded tops, and are on large square bases. The various gables, also, add greatly to the picturesque appearance of the building, as they are all formed of curved lines, and ornamented on their different stages with the vase-like balls and other enrichments, which, in the Elizabethan, succeeded to the pinnacle of earlier styles. The whole of the corners of the building are also quoined, and the surface of the walls is relieved by the introduction of blue bricks, forming a series of chequers.

The offices are so placed as not to intercept the view from the north side of the house, and extend for a considerable space from the Falconer's Lodge, forming, with the Terrace, and the wall connecting the north wing and lodge, a square, in the centre of which, on a large plot of turf, are a few trees. The bark of a waspish dog now alone awakes the echoes where once the neighing

of gallant steeds and the baying of numerous hounds gave earnest token of the exciting pleasures of the chase. From the courtyard, a bridle road leads to the pleasure grounds and kitchen gardens, which will be noticed in proper order.

The Hall is supplied with water from a well in the Hall Moors; a wheel, propelled from the Dovehouse Pool, forcing up the water, through pipes, into two tanks, one of them of immense size.

Before entering on an extended description of the interior of the edifice, a sketch of the position of the different apartments may, perhaps, not be out of place. The east front contains the Hall, with the Great Staircase on the south, and the Oak Staircase on the north, both reaching to the top of the house. Over the Hall are the Yellow, Middle, and Cleopatra Rooms, and above these a passage called "Dick's Garret," and servants' dormitories. At the back of the Hall, staircases, &c., and forming the west front, are five rooms, the centre one being the Saloon, to the north of which are the Dining Room and Yellow Library, and on the south, the Small Drawing Room and Green Library. These rooms are all beneath the Long Gallery.

The south wing contains, on the ground floor, the Colonnade and Colonnade Room, the Chapel, and a room to the east, known traditionally as "Mr. Lane's;" on the first floor, the vestibule to the Long Gallery, Lady Holte's Drawing Room, the Great Drawing Room, King Charles's Bed Room and Dressing Room, and one over "Mr. Lane's." On the second floor are several apartments for servants.

The north wing contains, on the ground floor, the Housekeeper's Room, Kitchens, Servants' Hall, &c.; on the first floor, the State Room, Lady Holte's Boudoir, the Blue Room, and the Chinese Room; and on the second floor, a number of apartments, intended chiefly for domestics. In the centre of each wing, also, is a tower staircase, for servants.*

The Great Hall is 47 feet long by 24 feet wide, having four large windows, of three lights each, divided by transoms into four compartments. These windows, which are placed two on either side of the entrance door, are deeply set in the walls, which are 4 feet 6 inches thick. The ceiling is of plaster, very richly decorated with bosses, flowers, grotesque heads, &c., within compartments geometrically arranged. A broad cornice, interspersed with animals—including the elephant, unicorn, lion, griffin, and stag—is carried round the room, the lower portions of the walls being wainscotted. Opposite the entrance door is another, leading to the Saloon, and in the panel on each side of the latter door is an arched compartment, with entablature, and pillars approaching to the Corinthian style; the one compartment containing a landscape, and the other a picture of an Italian ruin. In the north-west and south-west corners are similar compartments, flanked by pilasters, but without any entablature, and distinguished by a scroll ornament, carried as a decoration above the wainscoting. These compartments contain paintings representing Roman Emperors. These pictures, with the two landscapes, were valued to Mr. Legge, in 1794, at £1 10s. The fire-place is on the north side: the back of the grate bears the royal arms, with the initials C. R., and the compartments on each side contain the Holte crest, under which on the one side is the letter W., and on the other the letter H. Over the chimney-piece, on a square panel surrounded by Elizabethan scrolls, the following verses are inscribed in Roman characters:—

IF SERVICE BE TRY MEANE TO THRIVE,
THOV MUST THEREIN REMAINE,
BOTH SILENT FAITHFUL JUST AND TRYE,
CONTENT TO TAKE SOME PAINIE;
IF LOVE OF VERTUE MAY ALLURE,
OR HOPE OF WORLDLY GAINIE,
IF FEARE OF GOD MAY THEE PROCURE,
TO SERVE DOE NOT DISDAINE.

* The total number of rooms, including out-houses and farm buildings, as mentioned in the catalogue of the sale in 1817, is 102; the Chapel being omitted from the list.

A door in the south-east corner of the Hall leads to the Great Staircase, and a corresponding one in the north-east to the Oak Staircase. These, as well as the great entrance door, and that to the Saloon, have semicircular heads, and are further enriched with numerous small panels having raised centres, both on the doors and also carried up the jambs and architrave on their several faces. They also have the ornamental scroll-work carried above the wainscoting, similar to that just mentioned.

The Saloon has three windows, each of two lights; the centre one, however, has been formed into a door leading into a small porch opening on the Terrace. From this room a door to the south leads to the Small Drawing Room, which is lighted by two windows similar to those in the Saloon. The chimney-piece in this apartment is a rich specimen of the Elizabethan method of adapting human and animal forms, in bas-relief, as decorations on flat surfaces. Adjoining this room is the Green Library. North of the Saloon is the Dining Room, the only object worthy of notice in which is the chimney-piece, divided into panelled compartments, but heavy in design. Adjacent is the Yellow Library. These five rooms, forming the ground floor to the western front, are all beneath the Long Gallery.

From the vestibule in which the Great Staircase is situated, access is obtained to the South Front Colonnade Room, so called from opening, by means of half-doors, to the Colonnade attached to the Gardens. This room is panelled throughout, though the style is rather later than that of other parts of the house. Adjoining, to the south, is a doorway somewhat resembling those of the Great Hall, and containing within a scroll ornament, placed similarly to those before mentioned, but not so richly decorated, a shield charged with the arms of Holte empaling Clobery. This door opens into the Chapel Passage, and immediately opposite to it is another door, enriched with oblong panels boldly moulded, and square-headed. This opens into the gallery or seat in the Chapel appropriated to the Family. This seat, which is very commodious, though level with the ground floor of the house, is raised a few feet above the area of the Chapel, and runs along the whole of the north side. Adjoining the end of the passage is an apartment called "Mr. Lane's Room," close to the door of which, and at right angles, is a smaller passage, from which, by descending a flight of steps, entrance is obtained to the Chapel on its east side. The Chapel was lighted by two windows in the south wall. These are now stopped up, but a sufficient glimmering of light struggles along the passages to admit of the internal arrangements being dimly discerned. The walls are wainscotted, each being divided by pilasters into four compartments. To the east and west are placed large seats for the domestics, the centre of the floor being unappropriated. The communion table, which was of oak, covered with a crimson velvet cloth, was placed between the windows. The rails are carved in a manner similar to the Oak Staircase, to be hereafter described, but the table has been removed. The front of the Family pew was covered with velvet, and all the cushions were of crimson. The Bible was Watson's folio edition; the Prayer Books comprised two of Baskett's, in folio, covered with velvet; a Bill's, in blue Turkey; a Baskett's, large quarto, also in blue Turkey; twelve, in calf, marked with Sir Lister Holte's name; and a Baskerville's octavo. The Chapel was lighted by twenty-one brass sconces; and there was also a piece of tapestry hanging.

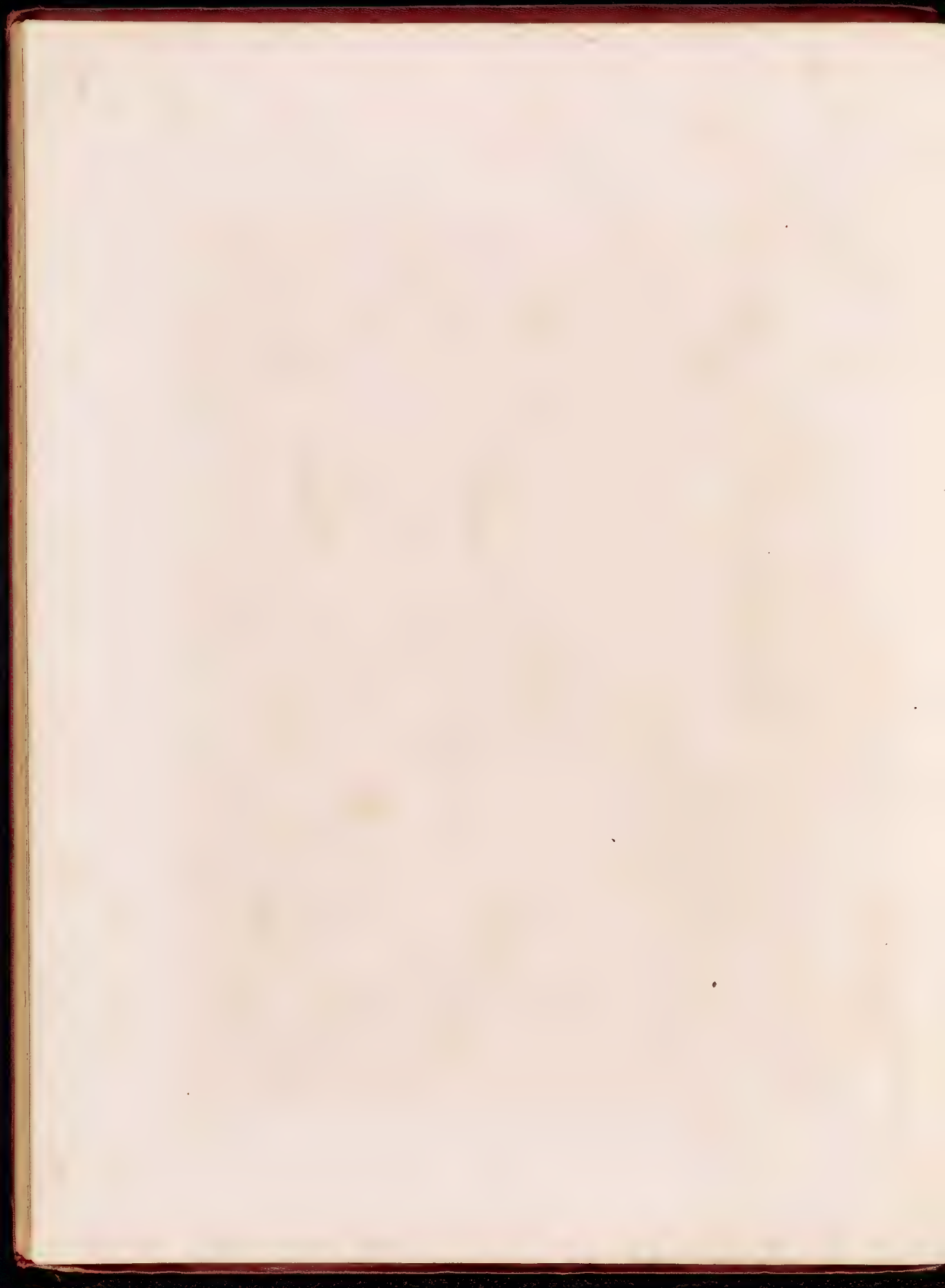
We now return to the Great Staircase. This is very similar in design to the famous one at Crewe, which has been so frequently described. It is divided by short flights of steps into numerous landings, and to each flight is an ornamental compartment divided by square high standards, enriched with grotesque heads, and other ornaments in basso relievo. From the first floor, however, the decoration consists only of low arabesque carving, but the whole standards are surmounted with vase-like ornamental terminations, boldly carved, and capped with an Ionic volute. The compartments between the standards are filled with a richly pierced strap ornament peculiar to the period. Instead of being of polished oak, as is usual, the staircase is painted, that portion from the ground floor to the first landing being now disfigured with white; the upper part, however, shows the decoration of the whole, the colours employed being a dull red and grey, with the minor ornaments indicated

by colour instead of carving. It may be noticed, as a peculiarity, that from the first landing the wall side has been painted in imitation of the staircase, but the drawing is of the rudest description, as also the colouring. The fourth, or first floor, landing is the place rendered memorable in connection with the assault on the Hall in 1643. The southern front was that selected for attack, and numerous marks still remain in the wall south of the staircase where the iron messengers forced an entrance. But one ball, after passing through two thick walls, in its course encountered the vase of one of the massive oak standards, and the stout post was riven from top to bottom, the ball finally lodging in the wall a few feet distant. The course, taken by another, in a diagonal direction, through the ornamental panelling, till it found a resting place near its companion, may also be distinctly traced. The shattered standard still remains in the condition to which it was reduced by the cannonading, as does also the balustrade; and for more than two centuries these interesting relics have remained—convincing proofs of the devoted loyalty of the old Baronet. From this memorable spot, the standards of the upper part of the staircase are simply ornamented with arabesque decorations, the carving being carried out with equal spirit through every portion. On the top landing are two doors,—one leading to the leads over the Long Gallery, and the other to a gloomy corridor in the roof, called “Dick’s Garret.” In the door opening from the sixth landing to the rooms over the Hall, is a circular hole—the effect of a stray shot at the time of the attack. The staircase is lighted on the ground and first floors by large double mullioned windows of three lights and six divisions each; in the ledge on the first floor window are two hollow sockets—in one of these was deposited the ball which has become so famous, its companion having been found in the garden. From the windows beautiful views of the noble avenue, the spire of the church, and the adjacent country, are obtained.

The Great Drawing Room, which is over the Chapel, is approached from the first landing of the staircase. The mouldings of the doorway are richly ornamented, the style of decoration slightly differing from that employed in other portions of the house. This splendid apartment, which is 39 feet by 23 feet, is lighted from the south by two noble mullioned windows, of three divisions and nine lights each, and from the portion of the wall in which they are placed projecting a little beyond the main line of the building, advantage has been taken to introduce a small window of two divisions and six lights on each side, thus adding materially to the effect. A large north window looking into the quadrangle has long been stopped up. The walls are panelled to within about a yard of the cornice, which is bold, but plain. The most peculiar feature of the decoration of the room, however, is an ornamental stone frieze placed between the cornice and panelling. It contains, under shallow semicircular-headed openings, placed at alternate distances round the room, bold figures in military costumes of different times and nations, ranging from the polished Roman to the rude Highlander; and from the mail-clad mediæval warrior to the courtly knight of the Elizabethan era. Four of these figures are displayed on the west, three on the south, three on the east, and one on the north, walls. The portions of the frieze between the figures are covered with decorations in low relief, similar to those in the ceiling. There is a general resemblance between this room and the large one at Crewe, though the details and the figures in the latter are much bolder. The ceiling is ornamented with one of those indescribable patterns peculiar to the period. It consists of three large centre oval compartments, flanked by the same number, of a similar description, on each side, every oval containing a smaller one ornamented with appropriate Elizabethan scroll work, the centres containing a cherub’s head; and each of the circles formed at the junctions of the principal ovals is filled with a grotesque head. The chimney-piece is especially worthy of notice. It reaches nearly to the cornice, and is divided into two parts by bold entablatures, each being supported by graduated pilasters;* the upper ones, moreover, rest on bases supported by grotesque

* The graduated or diminishing pilaster, with its grotesque heads or masks, is a distinctive feature of Elizabethan architecture, and is found, as in the present instance, as a member of the chimney-piece, and also often enlarged as a pilaster to divide panelled compartments. Externally, though not so frequently, it is used to break the formality of a series of perpendicular lines, as in the towers mentioned in the earlier part of this description. It is much to be wished that a consecutive arrangement and general nomenclature of details, &c., of this truly English style of domestic architecture, were arranged, similar to what has been done for the many varieties of our ecclesiastical styles.





heads. The centre of the upper part is left perfectly plain. On the upper entablature are placed scroll ornaments, enriched with shells; at equal distances on the scrolls being placed shields—Holte; Holte quartering Castells, Maidenach with Grimsarwe, and Willington; and Holte impaling Bradbourne. A door in the east wall, close to the fire-place, opens into King Charles's Bed Room, and one on the opposite side leads through Lady Holte's Drawing Room to the Long Gallery.

Lady Holte's Drawing Room is lighted by two windows on the south side. The decoration of the ceiling is in the geometrical pattern, similar to that in the Hall, and the design is very good. The chimney-piece is the only other object worthy of notice. This is singular from having the entablature supported by Corinthian columns of dark marble, the whole composition strikingly resembling a funereal monument of the same era. The doorways appear to have been carved at a much later period, as they do not, in many respects, assimilate to those in other parts of the house.

From this room access is obtained to the vestibule or upper end of the Long Gallery. The transition, altogether so unexpected, is striking, and fills the beholder with astonishment. As the eye sweeps down the long uninterrupted vista, the mind is involuntarily filled with wonder at the boldness that could design, and the skill that could execute, so choice a specimen of art and man's device. The massive walls, with the deeply-set old mullioned windows, through which the golden beams of the sun shine in rich effulgence—the polished oaken panelling, rising tier above tier till it approaches the lofty roof—the fluted pilasters crowned with chaste Ionic capitals—the magnificent ceiling, with its graceful adornments—and the chimney-piece, too elaborate for description—all these form a whole, worthy, indeed, of that noble mansion of which they constitute so distinguished a decoration. Nor is the view from the windows out of keeping with the apartment. On the north, the eye ranges over a wide landscape of richly-wooded country, extending across the Park to the demesne of Perry Barr; while in the distance, the College of Oscott, and the famed Barr Beacon, with the woods of Sutton Chase—over which one of the Holtes once was ranger—rise to the sight. From the west, a fine view of the lovely scenery of the Park is obtained—the rising grounds and dark woods of Handsworth bounding the view. To the south, the gardens impart an additional charm to the scene; while immediately in the foreground, an ample terrace walk extending the whole length of the building and the garden, and commanding an extensive view over the Park, terminates the landscape.

This Gallery—perhaps, with the exception of those at Hardwicke and Hatfield, the finest in England—is 136 feet in length, by 18 feet in width, and 16 feet high. It is lighted by five large mullioned windows, of four lights and twelve divisions each, the centre window slightly projecting. At the north end is a large oriel, in one of the compartments of which is a small shield, in stained glass, charged with the Family arms impaling Newton, and similar to the one in the east window of the north aisle of the Church. The walls are covered with oak panelling, divided, by pilasters having capitals, into thirteen compartments. These pilasters are divided into three stages—the lower, or base, being boldly moulded and ornamented. The second has numerous projecting bevelled blocks placed perpendicularly and horizontally, and surrounding a boldly carved acorn; while the third, or upper, is fluted in minute divisions, and finished with a capital. The rows of panels are eight in number, each containing a semicircular arch supported by pilasters, all in low relief, similar to those so often seen in pulpits of the Jacobean era. A shallow cornice, or frieze, covered with ornaments, also in low relief, is carried round the room. The ceiling is decorated with two rows of ornaments, formed of squares, having semicircular projections, the centres being occupied with graceful devices, of which the principal feature is the cornucopia. The chimney-piece is of marble, and by far the most important in the house, and is in the centre of the east wall. Its principal features are broad entablatures and cornices, supported by grotesque Caryatides, and divided into two principal portions, the upper one, again, being also divided into two compartments, containing oblong panels of grey marble surrounded by scroll-work. The lower portion is supported by graduated pilasters with

sculptured heads, in a fine style of art. Three shields, charged similarly to those in the Great Drawing Room, are placed on the upper part of the chimney-piece. The fire-place has hand-irons, for supporting logs of wood. Access to the Oak Staircase is gained by a door between the fire-place and the north end of the Gallery. There is also a small door that formed the southern entrance to the Gallery, from Lady Holte's Drawing Room, before the vestibule was added; but when the latter was erected, the aperture was closed. It should be noticed that the vestibule at the south end was an afterthought, as the Gallery originally terminated with the main wall of the house; but the vestibule being afterwards added over the Colonnade, contributed materially to heighten the general effect. The date of this addition is not known, but it was probably about 1650, as the view of the Hall in Dugdale shows the Colonnade without the vestibule.

King Charles's Bed Room, to the east of the Great Drawing Room, is of the same size as, and similarly lighted to, Lady Holte's Drawing Room. On the north side is a recess of some depth, in which the bed was placed. Each side of this recess is flanked, at the entrance, by a clustered pillar. On the western side is a small closet, into which three doors formerly opened—one leading into the room, another into the recess close to the head of the bed, and a third, in the north-west corner, leading through another small room, or rather closet, into the Great Drawing Room. These two last doors have been stopped up, and their original uses can now only be matter of conjecture. The decoration of the ceiling is geometrical, like that in Lady Holte's Drawing Room, but not so bold. This apartment is further ornamented with a bold frieze or cornice, similar to that in the Hall. The chimney-piece is of oak, and plain in comparison with those in other parts of the building. In the north-east corner of the room is a door leading to the other apartments in this wing, but they do not call for especial notice. On the south-east there is a small Dressing Room, its only ornament being a cornice, similar to that in the Bed Room, though on a smaller scale.

Over the Hall, and forming the centre of the first floor, are three rooms—the Yellow Room, or Nursery; the Middle Room; and the Red, or Cleopatra Room.

The Yellow Room contains, in its south wall, a small chimney-piece divided by bold entablatures into two portions; the upper one containing, under a semicircular arch on which recline two figures, a female, in bold relief, pouring water from an ewer. The lower part is supported by two nude demi-figures, rude in design, and clumsy in execution. Within the fire-place some quaint old tiles still remain.

Passing through the Middle Room, which contains no object worthy of description, the Red, or Cleopatra Room, is reached. This room is thus designated from a rude bas-relief over the chimney-piece, under a semicircular arch, and representing Cleopatra and the asp. In the west wall is a door leading into a small wainscotted apartment, called the Muniment Room.

From the Cleopatra Room access is obtained to the Oak Staircase, forming the means of communication with the northern wing of the building. This staircase is entirely of oak, enriched with balustrades having acorn ornaments appropriately introduced as pendants to the standards. On the right of the first landing is a door communicating with the Long Gallery, as before mentioned, and on the left a small vestibule lighted by a large window similar to those on the Great Staircase, while on the north side are two doors, one communicating with the Blue Room, and the other leading to the Chinese Room, Lady Holte's Boudoir, and the State Room. The Blue and Chinese Rooms are each lighted by two modern sash windows, the originals having been removed during Mr. Legge's occupancy of the Hall, and do not contain any object worthy of description. Over the fire-place in the Blue Room is a copy of a picture formerly belonging to the Holte Family, and styled "the Water Doctor." The State Room is rendered rather more important than those last mentioned, by having a dressing room thrown into it by means of a large depressed arch, and was probably so arranged at the close of the seventeenth century.





The upper story of the north wing, which is approached from the highest landing on the Oak Staircase, is principally devoted to servants' dormitories. These are lighted by small windows, in many of which the original casements, glazed with quarries of sand glass, still remain. The doors consist of stout pieces of oak nailed together, their only fastening being a latchet and string.

Over the Cleopatra and adjoining rooms, is a long dismal corridor in the roof, from which the central tower, and other rooms for servants, similar to those just described, are approached. This gloomy spot, into which just sufficient light gains admittance to make the darkness more apparent, is rendered still more dreary by the associations connected with it. It has long been known by the name of "Dick's Garret," being so denominated from a domestic who there hung himself from one of the low rafters of the roof. In the central tower—a huge mass of brickwork resting entirely on the timbers of the roof—is a chamber without any means of light, and called the "dark room," which also has its tradition, as having been, for several years, the place of confinement of one of the ladies of the Family who was supposed to be insane. At the extreme end of the Garret a door opens on to the top landing of the Great Staircase; so that the extremes of cheerfulness and gloom are here all but united. Another door on the same landing leads to the flat lead roof over the Long Gallery.

Immediately over Lady Holte's Drawing Room, and entered from the top of the Great Staircase, is a small room, commanding a pleasant view over the southern portion of the Park. The chimney-piece in this apartment has a depressed Tudor arch, and is remarkable as being of an earlier character than the other portions of the building; possibly it may have been removed hither from some other locality. The remaining apartments in this wing, and to the south-west, form servants' dormitories, and are similar to those in the corresponding wing.

In concluding the description of the house, it may be mentioned that it was evidently the architect's intention to bring prominently forward in the internal construction, the Entrance Hall, the Great Drawing Room, the Long Gallery, and the Staircases, as, after these, every other portion is comparatively small, and plain in the decoration; and the traditionary custom of having the chief rooms on the upper floor has also been observed.

The name of the architect of this noble pile has not been preserved. Richardson, in his observations on old English mansions, observes that there is every reason to suppose that Dorfold Hall, Crewe Hall, and Aston Hall, were built in successive order by the same architect. Many of the ceilings, fire-places, staircases, &c., are nearly the same in all the houses. The early rudeness of the style is seen at Dorfold Hall, its purity in Crewe Hall, and the commencement of its deterioration in Aston Hall. Nash, in the description to his first series of "The Mansions of England in the Olden Time," states that Crewe is one of the finest examples of the mansions of King James's time, and was built from a design (it is said) by Inigo Jones. Sarsfield Taylor, in his "Fine Arts in Great Britain and Ireland," says Crewe was built by Jones, but that it is really surprising how little is known, with certainty, of the mansions he built. Aston may, therefore, be one of Jones's productions.

At the north-east corner of the Terrace, a narrow flight of steps leads to the main drive through the Park, and to the Kitchen Garden and Pleasure Grounds. These are separated from the Park by a rustic paling, and shallow ditch, over which a small wooden bridge is thrown. Passing the wicket gate, immediately to the right is a sheet of water (two acres in extent) somewhat in the shape of a triangle, called the "Dovehouse Pool," having on its north side a grass walk, parallel to which, but separated by a plantation of rhododendrons, is a gravel walk, which adjoins the south wall of the Kitchen Garden. Passing forward along the main walk, the road leads through a retired path, bounded on one side by flowering and deciduous shrubs, with a background of large trees, and on the other by the garden wall, along which are trained numerous beautiful shrubs and

flowers. At the termination of this walk is an irregular avenue of lime and other trees, leading to a lawn on the margin of the "Staffordshire Pool," (seven acres in extent,) so called from the county boundary passing through it. The view from this spot is one of exceeding beauty. A noble oak, around whose massive trunk a rustic seat has been placed, spreads its broad pendent branches over the verdant turf, while another, planted on the margin of the pool, dips its leafy boughs into the clear deep waters below. A small neat fishing lodge, apparently in the style of Queen Anne's reign, harmonises admirably with the surrounding scenery, and affords accommodation for the angler. Adjoining this lodge are the poultry pens and dovecot. Winding round a curve of the pool, and passing through a small clump of lofty trees, is seen a bridge, placed in a very picturesque spot, and spanning the narrow outlet connecting the pool with the fish stews. The aspect of these stews is of a wild and almost savage character. The dense foliage of the trees casting a dark shadow, which a stray glimpse of sunlight but serves, by the contrast, to render more perceptible; the black and unruffled appearance of the apparently stagnant pools; the ever-recurring sound of falling water; and the gloomy isolation of the spot—all combine to produce an impression of the most solemn and striking nature. Leaving the place just referred to to the right, and crossing the little bridge, the road winds, by a double walk, along the side of the pool, through a grove of the most beautiful rhododendrons and other flowering shrubs, while forest trees of a larger growth are not wanting to impart an additional charm. At intervals, an opening in the foliage permits a glimpse of the scenery of the Park to be obtained; and from an aged willow, whose branches float on the surface of the water, at the north angle of the pool, an exquisite view of the north-west portion of the Hall is obtained. From this point the walk extends a considerable distance, terminating in an open space of some extent, (recalling to mind the pleasance of olden days,) in the centre of which is an ornamental grass-plot, in front of an elegant alcove, so placed as to command a view, from east to west, directly across the pool. In this place the Pleasure Grounds terminate, but the plantations are continued at the back of the farm buildings, and past a third pool called the "Great Pool," (containing sixteen acres,) to the Lodge on the Walsall Road.

The Church Lodge, which was the original entrance to the Park, and so called from being opposite the western end of the old Parish Church, is worthy of a passing notice. It consists of a large central gateway, of stone, on either side of which is a small postern door, and these are flanked by low brick buildings, forming small residences, having curved gables (in which the Holte crest is inserted) and mullioned windows. But the distinguishing characteristic is a large ogee arch of stone over the centre gate, ornamented with crockets and a large finial, and evidently intended by the designer as an imitation of the enriched arches of the fifteenth century, and probably considered thus to harmonise with the adjoining Church. On either side of this arch are tall pyramids or pinnacles of stone, partaking rather of a funereal character. Just within the gates are some venerable trees; and, combined with a distant glimpse of the stately Hall on the one hand, and the beautiful old Church and quiet churchyard on the other, the whole forms a most agreeable and pleasing picture. The other Lodge, on the western side of the park, adjoins the Walsall New Turnpike Road, and, though modern, is built in very good taste. Owing, however, to the sale of the adjoining land, its removal may shortly be expected.

The wall that formerly encircled the Park was built by Sir Lister Holte, and the tradition has long been current that the expense was borne by Staffordshire coalmasters, on Sir Lister's undertaking that no attempt should be made to mine for coals supposed to lie under a portion of the estate.

About the same time as the Aston property was disposed of, the magnificent mansion of Brereton Hall was also offered for sale. The house and park (the greater part of the estate having been previously sold off) came into the possession, about 1828, of Mr. Howard, of Hyde, Lancashire, a manufacturer. There is a beautiful engraving of it in Ormerod's *Cheshire*, Vol. III., and also in Nash's *"Mansions of England."* *"The Baronial Halls of England,"* Vol. I., edited by S. C. Hall, also contains a short illustrated account of it. The estate, as mentioned in a previous page, came to the Holte Family through the marriage of Jane, daughter of Sir John Brereton, with Sir Robert Holte, in 1646. This lady being the great aunt of Francis the fifth and last Lord Brereton, and grand-daughter of William, the first Lord, the estates descended to her son (two months only before his death) as heir at law, but the title became extinct. The powerful Family of Brereton was known in the time of William Rufus, but first rose into importance in the reign of Edward III. It possessed various seats in Cheshire, where it was, and still is, a saying that the Brereton could go on his own land from his parish church of Astbury to Chester, a distance of twenty-five miles.

Sir William Brereton, in the reign of Henry VIII., held the high offices of Grand Justiciary and Grand Marshal in Ireland. He subdued the great O'Neil, and brought him to "a composition," and was marching, in 1541, with a large force to "bring in" the powerful Earl Desmond, when he was arrested by illness, and died at Kilkenny, where he was buried in the choir of the church of St. Kenneth. This gentleman seems to have settled many of his Family in Ireland, where several branches remain to this day. Sir William, his grandson, is mentioned by Strype (*Ecclesiastical Memorials*, 1557, cap. 56) as leading 200 Cheshire men to Lord Derby's levy of Lancashire and Cheshire men for the war in Scotland. This Sir William's son, or the third Sir William, was also employed in Ireland. He was long at the court of Queen Elizabeth and King James, and by the latter monarch was, in 1624, created Baron Brereton, of Leighlin or Loughlin, in the Kingdom of Ireland, and died in 1631. He married Margaret, daughter of Sir John Savage, of Rock Savage, formerly Clifton, in Cheshire, and of Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas, Earl of Rutland, a lineal descendant of John of Gaunt, Edmund Langley, Duke of York, King Edward III., and Don Pedro, King of Castile. Lord Brereton, of whom a portrait is preserved at Atherstone, was a portly and noble gentleman, with lofty forehead, oval countenance, and fresh colour. He lived to a good old age, and was the founder of Brereton Hall, on the site of the more ancient mansion of the head of his Family.

The house, finished before 1578, is placed on a rising ground above the little river Croc, which issues from Bagmere, in the estate, a small lake celebrated for its floating island, recorded in Camden's *Britannia*, from a ford over which the approach led through an ornamental brick gateway and low walled courts* to the great door, beneath a groined arch. This door is flanked by octagonal towers rising to a great height, and united above by an ornamental arch joining their upper rooms; below, they are pierced with ornamented windows on both stories. On each side of the towers is the body of the building, of two stories above the basement, covered by a lead roof, and having a handsome balustrade. The front is terminated at each end by a lofty gable, rising over a wide projection pierced with bold bay windows in all the stories. The house forms three sides of a quadrangle. On the left of the front a side door communicates with offices attached to the kitchen and servants' hall, both in the wing on that side, while a door on the right wing (in which are the great dining room, staircase, and library) opens towards the churchyard, nearly adjoining. Both wings are covered with heavy stone roofs, the towers being domed with lead. Toward the interior of the quadrangle is a wide stone corridor, above the basement story, and ascended to from the great door by two handsome flights of steps; and above this corridor is a long gallery uniting two narrower corridors, which give entrance to the apartments in the wings. The chief apartments open to the gallery above, and to the corridor below. The whole structure is of brick, with stone mouldings and ornamental courses. Over the great doorway is the date 1586.

* The courts and arch are now removed.

Queen Elizabeth is said to have laid the first stone of Brereton Hall, and after its completion she honoured its owner with a visit. Not only had this loyal gentleman a large state picture of her Majesty in panel, but he also caused the external stonework of the Hall to be decorated with her arms, and with her double roses and portcullis. In the oriel window over the great door were the royal arms finely emblazoned, and supported by a lion and griffin, the whole being flanked with the double rose and portcullis, surmounted by crowns. Below was the motto "Vivat Regina, 1578;" above, the letters "E. R." This beautiful piece of glass is now at Atherstone. Lord Brereton, besides several very fine armorial chimney-pieces, decorated his dining hall with a frieze on which are emblazoned the arms of forty-seven sovereign princes of Europe and Africa at that period. He filled his windows with the coats of arms of the Earls and Barons of the county of Chester soon after the conquest, and then with the gentlemen of the same county entitled to bear arms in the time of Elizabeth; in all 330 coats of arms, richly and beautifully emblazoned in the finest colours. The heraldry is certified in a parchment book (still preserved) by the Herald Somerset, and signed by Sir William Brereton, 1608. But the more important specimens of painted glass with which he adorned the Hall (and which have much engaged the attention of antiquaries and connoisseurs) are the effigies of the seven Earls of Chester and two Earls of Mercia, each figure having beneath it the arms of some noble family descended from these Earls, (as, indeed, was Lord Brereton himself,) with all their quarterings, surrounded by a Garter, with its motto, and surmounted by a coronet. This extraordinary work of art was removed from Brereton to Aston some time after the former estate came into the possession of the Holtes, and, in 1817, was removed thence to Atherstone Hall, where, in a high state of preservation, it now graces the window of Mr. Bracebridge's library.

The great Norman Earls,* who originated with the Conqueror, succeeded to the power, possessions, and blood of the Saxon Earls of Mercia. The two last of this latter dynasty form, therefore, the beginning of the series. They were Leofwine and Leofric, the latter the husband of Lady Godiva, and contemporary with his kinsman, Edward the Confessor. The first Norman Earl is Hugh Lupus, nephew of the Conqueror, to whom the County Palatine of Chester was granted to hold by the sword as freely as William held England. He held, among other tribunals, a court at Chester, where "pleas of the sword," *i.e.*, matters against the rights and dignities of the Earl Palatine, were tried; and exercised sovereign right compatible with allegiance to the King.

Richard, his son, succeeded. He was drowned with the son and daughter of Henry I. in their unhappy shipwreck, in 1120. His brother Orwell, the tutor of the royal offspring, was also drowned at the same time.

The third Earl was Randolph Meschines, son of John de Bohun, Earl of Cumberland, and Margaret, sister of Hugh Lupus, (consequently his nephew.) This Earl, after a marriage with Maude, daughter of Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Guisnes, was united to Lucia, daughter of Algar, son of Leofric and Lady Godiva, the representative (her brothers, Edwin and Morcar, being dead) of the line of King Harold. His son, therefore, Randolph Vernoues, or Gernouns, fourth Earl of Chester, united the Norman blood of Lupus and King William with that of the Saxon Earls of Mercia and Kings of England. He acted a conspicuous part in the war between Stephen and Maud, often changing sides. He at one time is stated to have held a third of England by conquest. He died, by poison, after a reign of twenty-five years. His successor was his son, Hugh de Bohun, or Kevelioc, fifth Earl. He reigned twenty-eight years, and died 1181, having married Beatrix, daughter of Richard Lucy, Lord Chief Justice of England; and next, Bertred, daughter of Simon, Earl of Evreux, in Normandy, by whom he had a son, Randolph Blundeville, sixth Earl, and five daughters. Randolph, already distinguished by feats of arms in the time of King Richard and John, was mainly accessory to the elevation of Henry III. to the throne, with the Pope's legate

* For this account we are indebted to Mr. Bracebridge's paper, read at the meeting of the Archaeological Institute, at Warwick, in 1847.

and the Earl of Pembroke. He joined the crusade to the Holy Land about 1218, and died without issue, being succeeded, in 1232, by his nephew John, surnamed Scot, son of Maud, daughter of Hugh Kevelioc, and David, Earl of Angus and Huntingdon. He was the last Earl, and died, without issue, in 1237, when the King took the earldom to himself, and, disinheriting John's sisters, gave them large feuds and possessions instead of their legal inheritance. Ada, the fourth of these sisters, married, for her third husband, Sir Ralph Brereton, of Brereton, and lies buried, with him, under a beautiful canopied tomb, in the churchyard of Astbury, then the parish church of Brereton. The date is about 1270.*

The space of glass (formerly enclosed between the mullions of stone) which forms the field in which each Earl stands, is $34\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the figures being $23\frac{1}{4}$ inches high. The Earls Leofwine and Leofric of Mercia have different coronets from the rest; in other respects all the figures are similar. Each Earl is in full plate armour, *cap à pied*, excepting the coronet instead of helmet. This armour is of the time when the glass was painted, and in no respect represents that of the period when each Earl flourished. The arms are—a sword drawn in the right hand, and a large dagger hanging from the belt; in two or three instances the armour is inlaid with gold. Each figure wears gauntlets, and over the armour is thrown a rich surcoat, (the Earls of Mercia bear it black, and the others, azure, yellow, or red,) on which the arms of each Earl are richly emblazoned, without a shield. The figures stand on a floor of yellow, from whence a background of yellow and white chequers rises knee-high; on each side are pillars of yellow glass, supporting an arch of blue, in the crown of which is introduced a grotesque lion's head, of yellow, bearing a basket filled with rich yellow flowers, and wreaths of these are suspended from the centre of the arch to the capitals of the columns. The Earls themselves have their heads in different directions, and some are painted with red hair. Square cut beards and moustaches give to all a venerable character, mingled with a martial and noble bearing. The Earl Richard, son of Hugh Lupus, who perished at the age of twenty-five, is an exception to the rest, being represented as a beardless youth. Though the figures are somewhat stiff, the general effect is imposing, and exceedingly good, being much relieved by the brilliant arms on the breast, and the admirable manner in which the leading is arranged, so as to give shade and outline to the contour of each figure.

In the like space of plain glass which each Earl occupies, and below each, are the richly-quartered arms of some noble family descended from them, as Stanley, Somerset, Sydney, Compton, &c.; and these are enclosed in a rich azure garter edged with gold, with buckles and points of the same; above each is a widely-spread coronet of gold. The height of the painted glass, from the apex of the coronet to the gold point of the pendent part of the garter, is $20\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the width 13 inches; and on each garter is the motto, in golden letters, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*" The arms, as given upon the surcoats on the breasts of the two Earls of Mercia, are a double-headed eagle displayed, or, on a black surcoat. Of the seven Earls of Chester, the arms are as follow:—1st, Hugh Lupus—rouge, a wolf's head erased, argent; 2nd, Richard—the same, but with the rouge surcoat par semé, with cross-crosets, argent; 3rd, Randolph Meschines—or, a lion rampant, gules; 4th, Randolph Vernoues—gules, a lion rampant, argent; 5th, Hugh Kevelioc—azure, six garbes, or; 6th, Randolph Blundeville—azure, three garbes, or; 7th, John Scott—the same.

With this lengthened description of this extraordinary work of art, we bring our history of the Holte Family to a close.

The shadow of the Past—the mighty Past—looms darkly over Aston. It is impossible to feel otherwise than thoughtful, if not sad, in gazing on that extensive and noble pile, oft resonant with joy and gladness, but now, alas! lonely and deserted. But lonely and deserted though it be, it speaks most eloquently to him who in silent contemplation muses on the lessons it teaches.

* Vide Sir Peter Leicester's History of the Earls of Leicester, &c.

It reminds him of the instability of all things earthly; of the nothingness of worldly honours and human greatness; and it tells him, in the Ichabod written on its walls, that "they build too low who build below the skies." Reader, enter with us that old Parish Church. As we pass the threshold across which so many generations of busy feet, now silent among the clods of the valley, once trod, let a feeling of awe, as though in the immediate presence of Him whose presence pervades all space, come over our minds; and as we approach that spot where the memorials of the noble departed lie so thickly scattered above us, beneath us, and around us, let us pray that we may be enabled, from their history, to learn a lesson of lasting benefit. And let those sepulchral monuments, which tell of fidelity to earthly monarchs, of enlightened patriotism, of disinterested philanthropy, of Christian faith and hope, of conjugal affection, and, alas! of bitter hostility, be to us a homily not lightly passed by. Two generations have gone to their final account since the Last of the Holtes was gathered to his fathers. But the lessons to be derived from the Family history remain as forcible as ever. Be it ours, then, to draw such instruction therefrom as shall be best calculated to enable us to avoid their errors, and to surpass their good deeds. Then will our study of their history not have been in vain.

QUARTERINGS OF THE HOLTE FAMILY.

HOLTE—Azure, two bars or; in chief a cross patence of the second.

ERDINGTON—Azure, two lions passant, or.

DE WOLFEY—Or, between three mullets gules, a lion rampant, sable.

CASTELS or CASTLES—Gules, three castles, or.

GRIMSARWE or GRIMSHAW—Azure, a cross fleuré argent, in chief a label of three points, gules. Borne quarterly with

MAIDENHACH—Barre of six, argent and gules, engrailed; a canton dexter, gules.

COLLING—Azure, two wings displayed, or.

COMBERFORD—Gules, upon a cross engrailed or, five roses of the first.

KNIGHT, of Baschurch, Salop—Paly, argent and gules, with bordure azure; on a canton gules a spur, or.

WILLINGTON, of Barcheston—Gules, a saltire vair, azure and argent.

FERRERS, of Tamworth Castle—Vaire, or and gules.

BRADBOURNE, of the Hough, Derbyshire—Argent, on a bend gules three mullets, or.

BRERETON—Argent, two bars, sable.

MALPAS—Gules, three pheons, argent.

BARON of MALPAS—Argent, a cross fleuré, azure.

EGERTON DE MALPAS—Argent, between six pheons sable a lion rampant, gules, tongued and clawed azure.

CORBET—Or, two crows, sable.

ORREBY—Chevronné of six, gules and ermine; in a dexter canton, gules, a lion passant, or.

STRANGE—Gules, two lions passant, argent, langued and tongued azure; a label of three points, or.

CLOBERY, of Bradstone—Argent, a bend engrailed cotizé, sable.

LISTER, of Whitfield—Ermine, upon a fess sable three mullets, argent.

PEDIGREES OF THE HOLTE FAMILY.

IN THE HARLEIAN COLLECTION.

MS. 1.100, folio 12 b. 1.167, folio 6 b. 1.563, folio 22 b.

IN KING'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

MS. 150, folio, p. 211.

PATENTS, COMMISSIONS, &c.,

UNDER THE GREAT SEAL, BELONGING TO THE HOLTE FAMILY,

(IN POSSESSION OF MR. BRACEBRIDGE.)

1544.—85 Henry VIII.—Decree in Chancery, under the great seal, between Edward Birmingham, Lord of Birmingham, and Thomas Holte, Benchet of the Middle Temple, Lord of Aston. Marked on one side (apparently at the time) "the King's letters patent for the confirmation of some grants."

1612.—9 James I.—Patent of Baronetage to Sir Thomas Holte, Knight.

1612.—Receipt from the Exchequer for Baronetage Money.

1625.—1 Charles I.—General Pardon, under great seal, to Sir Thomas Holte. Dated February 10th.

1637.—13 Charles I.—Commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant, to Sir Thomas Holte.

1638.—14 Charles I.—Commission of the Peace for the county of Warwick, to Sir Thomas Holte.

1638.—Ditto.—Commission of the Peace for the county of Warwick, to Robert Holte.

1641.—17 Charles I.—First warrant for subsidy, under the great seal.

1660.—12 Charles II.—Patent of High Sheriff, to Sir Robert Holte.

1660.—Ditto.—Commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant for the county of Warwick, to Sir Robert Holte.

1661.—13 Charles II.—Pardon and Indemnity to Sir Robert Holte. Dated February 28th.

1662.—14 Charles II.—Commission of the Peace to Sir Robert Holte, under the great seal.

1662.—Ditto.—Commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of the county of Warwick, to Sir Robert Holte, others being joined with him in the Commission.

1663.—15 Charles II.—Commission, signed "Northampton, Master of his Majesty's Leash," to Sir Robert Holte, Bart., to take and seize greyhounds, &c., for the use and disport of his Majesty.

1680.—81 Charles II.—Commission of the Peace for the county of Warwick, to Sir Charles Holte.

1683.—34 Charles II.—Commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of the county of Warwick, to Sir Charles Holte.

1684.—85 Charles II.—Commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant, to Sir Charles Holte.

1684.—Ditto.—Duplicate of ditto.

1685.—1 James II.—Commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant, to Sir Charles Holte.

1686.—2 James II.—Commission of Deputy Lord-Lieutenant, to Sir Charles Holte and others.

1767.—Indenture between Sir Lister Holte, High Sheriff of Cheshire, and John Wilson, of Sandbach, gentleman, his Under Sheriff.

ANCIENT DEEDS OF THE HOLTE FAMILY,

RELATIVE TO PROPERTY AT ASTON, BORDESLEY, DUDDESTON, ERDINGTON, NECHELLS, &c.,

(IN POSSESSION OF MR. BRACEBRIDGE.)

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| 9 Edward III. | 1336 | 14 Edward IV. | 1474 | 5 Henry VIII. | 1514 |
| 10 " | 1337 | 19 " | 1479 | 6 " | 1515 |
| 15 " | 1342 | 20 " | 1480 | 7 " | 1516 |
| 16 " | 1343 | 20 " | 1480 | 24 " | 1533 |
| 40 " | 1367 | 1 Edward V. | 1483 | 29 " | 1538 |
| 49 " | 1376 | 9 Henry VII. | 1494 | 2 Elizabeth | 1560 |
| 49 " | 1376 | 12 " | 1497 | 8 " | 1566 |
| 2 Richard II. | 1379 | 12 " | 1497 | 13 " | 1571 |
| 11 " | 1388 | 16 " | 1501 | 18 " | 1576 |
| 18 " | 1395 | 18 " | 1503 | 19 " | 1577 |
| 18 Henry VI. | 1440 | 18 " | 1503 | 21 " | 1579 |
| 18 " | 1440 | 24 " | 1509 | 27 " | 1585 |
| 28 " | 1450 | 24 " | 1509 | 27 " | 1585 |
| 1 Edward IV. | 1461 | 24 " | 1509 | 41 " | 1599 |
| 12 " | 1472 | 4 Henry VIII. | 1513 | 9 James I. | 1612 |

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